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HYDE MARSTON;

OR,

A SPORTSMAN'S LIFE.

BY CRAVEN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

MARRIED OR SINGLE.

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“The greatest object in the universe, says a certain philosopher, is a good man struggling with adversity: yet there is still a greater, which is, the good man that comes to relieve it.”

GOLDSMITH.

“My wife, my liege? I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business, give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes.”

All's Well that Ends Well.

“Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.”

Merry Wives of Windsor.

HYDE MARSTON;
OR,
A SPORTSMAN'S LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

The men about town are wiser in their generation than were those of the species when George the Fourth was king. A few, perhaps, took common sense naturally, but the greater portion were inoculated for it by the hand of Fashion, who, in her turn, was compelled to it by the force of *Club* law.

A statue of virgin gold, reaching unto the stars, deserveth that philanthropist, who, by the magic of a word, erected and endowed

palaces for the seedy out of the superfluities of the well breeched. Let no one henceforth speak disparagingly of the nineteenth century. In what other epoch since the world escaped from chaos do we find such an anticipation of paradise, as that permitted mankind to taste by the institution of clubs?

By mankind, of course I intend that portion of it alone worthy to rank above their fellow-animals, the philosophic circles of great cities, who live upon their wits—that is, upon their immortalities. Is it sorcery hath brought it to pass that those who, a score of years ago, were fain to drag on existence by the aid of cow-heel and tripe, now lead ambrosial lives upon French cookery, German wines, and Austrian *liqueurs*?

Hath it fallen out, through necromancy, that the knight of modern chivalry “lives very well upon ninepence a day?” and sallying from his garret to some tapestried saloon in Waterloo Place, or Pall Mall, whispereth to his spirit, while extended on a silken otto-

man—" *Quis deus hæc otia fecit?*" Was it natural magic, or the wand of an enchanter, that thus levelled all social distinction, and elevated "Simmery Ax" to St. James's? No; it was the most wonderful of civil revolutions—the establishment of Clubs.

According to this system, five thousand persons are elected members of a society which supplies accommodation for fifty. The consequence is, the select half hundred are provided for *nine thousand per cent.* under cost price in the items of board and lodging. Thus members of this or that United Service Club, quartered by half-pay within easy distance of their respective flesh-pots, sit down to a mess towards which other members, whom the Horse Guards have quartered at Botany Bay, or Connemara, contribute ninety-nine hundreths. Here and there, indeed, are said to be details in the housekeeping which the Sybarites of former days would hardly have relished; for instance, the bill of fare of a certain very dashing establishment, not a hundred miles from the Duke of York's

column, it is asserted, contains the following choice of expenses :—

	s.	d.
Fish	1	0
Good Fish	1	6
Very good Fish	2	0

but this may be a piece of *mauvaise plaisanterie*.

My moral spring, the seed-time of my wild oats, however, fell not in days when Yorkshire squires, or the breeders of Welch flannel or Highland kine, contributed an annual stipend to support the mob of gentlemen who live at ease, and do more of nothing than any other race under the moon.

Dinners from oysters to ice at three shillings a-head, and champagne as cheap as bottled stout, were things unknown a score of years ago, when youths of spirit fed as lavishly as Lucullus, and slaked their thirst as regardless of expense as Cleopatra when she drank to Antony. As will be supposed, I was at this epoch up to the chin in difficulties—a little more, and my head would

have been absolutely under water. In fact, I had got into the worst set that a young man can by any possibility fall in with.

The most careless loungeur through the paths of life, if he do not altogether shut his eyes to character, will observe that nature, in amalgamating the instinct of shabbiness with our tendencies, has bestowed upon it the property of expansion in the ratio of the condition of those subjects in which it exists.

Among the six millions of the Creator's image that exhibit the dignity of the human species, and its power of accommodation to a vegetable diet, in that modern Eden which poets call the Emerald Isle, it is very doubtful that a real specimen of the sterling stingy is in existence. Search the environs of London, such suburban villages as Clapham, Tulse Hill, Sydenham, and the like; and here and there, in some retired citizen with his plum in the three per cents., or quaker practising mortification after a fashion that a Sybarite might envy, you may haply detect cases of prominent meanness; but for first-

rate samples of the eminently beggarly—for genuine specimens of the superlatively sordid—seek among the cadets of rank.

The law of primogeniture having set up a golden calf in each aristocratic household, nature supplies, in the junior branches, a service of brazen *penates*. Now, there are two species of paltriness: there is the niggardliness of the mere miser who sets out a dinner for his friends of eggs and turnips, borrowed from his neighbour's garden and hen-roost, eking out his family supper with the shells and parings of the same, which stinginess is occasionally allied to a capacity for a good deed or generous impulse; and there is the more deeply steeped meanness of the selfish libertine, who stakes fame, conduct, character, even life, to escape honourable exertion, while he insures *dishonourable* luxury.

In thus implying low motives, with their consequences, to high people, I broach no doctrine whose origin is personal spleen or damage. I pity rather than scorn those who set up for gentlemen without the tools; and,

though I confess to more than one palpable aristocratic hit, I cannot call to mind any noble friend who did more than *borrow* my money, which everybody cannot say for him or herself.

But I have known a member of parliament enact the sharper on the turf; one of an estate higher, do that in the yachting line which men call swindling; while I was taught what the perfection of "a dirty fellow" is, by one who certainly did not hold *that* title by courtesy. My own career, at this time, augured ill for the health of my sire's pockets, my sagacity never contemplating a problem so intricate as an expenditure confined within the limits of my own. I associated with those who spent largely: therefore it was to me a necessity that I should do likewise.

The upshot of all this, and that of the conclave which so virtuously addressed itself to my benefit, as recorded in the last chapter, was my father's urgent commands, backed by the proposals of Uncle Tom, that I should at once give up the commodities of my vagabond

town life and betake myself forthwith to—— domain, in the sporting county of Leicester; where, under pretence of field-pleasures, I was to nibble a second time at the matrimonial bait. In describing my sposa that was to be, Uncle Tom waxed eloquent.

Using many endearing terms to lure my roving fancy to the point at issue, he harangued enough of charming country simplicity, domestic affections, dignity of carriage, principle, and decorum, and a well-regulated mind, to make one, less astute than I, surmise that he was to be wedded to a Gorgon. However, endowing her with the cardinal virtues and thirty thousand pounds, he wound up with “the finest girl in the county.” An approving nod from my progenitor attested his satisfaction with the item of the thirty thousands. Both looked at me with visages indicative of belief that such charms, united, were never obnoxious to objection.

They say youth is disinterested: I deem it to be more selfish than maturity. It is only lavish of that which costs nothing; the gold

obtained without care is as easily parted from; but it is impatient of a day, an hour, a minute snatched from its pleasures; avid of these, it grudges the price to be paid for them; thence its tendency to incur debts it cannot defray. I was certainly rather less, than more, immaculate than the youths of my standing. Thirty thousand pounds, though, in the three per cents. (backed by my uncle's liberal provision for past and future liabilities) were a desirable acquisition to a spendthrift who reckoned champagne (the fashionable wine of the day) and opera-boxes among the necessities of life; and yet did I, no whit dazzled by the *catalogue raisonné* of Miss Mary Turville's perfections, *look* as steadily my aversion to this wedding project as Bertram said it in the motto to my chapter.

We feel, before we define our feelings. It was not, however, the holy state that I eschewed; it was the destruction of the most concealed, and therefore the most cherished of my hopes—it was that in my wildest hours a soft and fairy vision would flit across my

memory, and imprint on it, ere it vanished, a gracious promise for the future. Vague and indefinite were my musings ; for

“ In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.”

Yet, warring with my other and better nature, and often successfully interposing between me and folly, were those vestal visitants endeared to me as harbingers of a possible hereafter — of which Charlotte, loving and beloved, was the presiding deity. I gave, nevertheless, the lie to my visage and intention by the following dutiful reply to the family speeches, addressed more particularly to my father :—“ Very well, sir, when am I to be off ?”

“ The day after to-morrow, my dear boy, if that jumps with your humour : my *dear* boy,” he repeated with glistening eyes, giving my hand at the same time an affectionate squeeze in the delight of this unlooked-for assent.

“ Very fine,” quoth I to myself ; and aloud

—" Shall I make Maher my avant-courier, sir?"

" Certainly, certainly," replied my father, although he was far from seeing the necessity.

Here Uncle Tom signalised himself by thrusting into my hand a cheque for a hundred pounds.

At the specified time we reached that delicious part of Charnwood Forest, inhabited by the Turvilles.

" Is not this a blessed retreat for your latter days, you lucky dog?" remarked Uncle Tom, as we drove through the lodge-gates.

" A well-chosen spot for a week's hunting," was my temperate answer, as we traversed a heathy wilderness.

Our host was a totally different creature from that I had supposed my uncle's fidus Achates. For the picture drawn by my imagination of a humorist like himself, I had to substitute that of a quick man of the world, of constitutional easiness of access and temper, somewhat restrained by a strong leaven

of family pride. For this the best judges gave him *carte-blanche* (his ancestor in direct line having come in with the Conqueror). The term *old* family always delights me, (as though a rich and long-titled family were *older* than that of the most obscure individual in this world of fallacies.)

It is the darling sin of pitiful human nature to value gifts extraneous of merit beyond others. We are uplifted above our fellow-creatures, for that our predecessor sacked a castle, butchered a generation, and divided the profit therefrom between himself and suzerain! or an usurer's money-bags purchased half a county, and lo, his son's son is a prince! There is another guess sort of gentility—genius be praised for its definition—

“Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit
Do give thee five-fold blazon.”

The lady of Beaulieu Turville was endowed with as much pride, and lacked the good temper of her husband; their family consisted of two daughters, co-heiresses—the

elder was plain, unaffected, pleasing, and about to be married; the younger, infinitely better-looking, a bold, dashing, lively sort of a girl, whose discourse stopped short of the masculine, in that she had not adopted the then prevailing fashion of oaths. The unsophisticated maiden of Uncle Tom's panegyric was, in fact, a true growth of the soil, an inbred and thorough sportswoman, who knew as much of the stable, and as little of domestic affairs, as her father's groom. She also evinced a shrewd sense of her own importance as an heiress, by that decision of tone and manner which is the grave of interest in a woman.

Maher had prepared me for the character of my intended, but not for the gullibility of my respectable relative. I made my toilet an important item of that day's procedure. I was bestowed in a very respectable dressing-room adjoining a sleeping closet, which was furnished with a full-sized Psyche glass. The reflection gave me at the completion of my toilet a very adequate representation of a fop,

although, according to the immortal artist, Stultz¹—whose mortal remains now repose amid orange groves—I should have past as the epitome of a well-dressed man.

My nether supporters were endued into tight-fitting Genoa velvet trowsers, which sloped over the thinnest Morocco boots ever worn out of Spain. A cambric of gossamer texture adorned my neck, relieved by a large single emerald, that scintillated on its snow like the rays of the planet Jupiter on a silver sea. The delicate grey of my waistcoat was shaded with a still more delicate blossom colour to heighten my complexion. A hair chain of elaborate workmanship held a crystal in a rim of the purest jet. My gloves were a marvel of a fit. In short, I looked and moved that now obsolete thing—a dandy.

I found that my uncle was confined to his chamber by certain twinges, precursors of a fit of the gout. I looked in on him as I

¹ *The* Stultz, whose fingers should never have been sullied with less classic strain than Tyrian purple, is buried in Provence.

descended, and found that he laid my elaborate toilet to the account of a strong wish to please. A large party was assembled in the drawing-room; it consisted principally of that species who finished a morning's hunt, at that most hunting of all eras, by an evening's carouse. I found ample time during dinner to admire the sporting enthusiasm of my lady-love, and to lay the foundation of successful aversion on her side.

"We shall have a capital field to-morrow," was her first remark, as I sat by her side, absently sipping my *soupe aux épinards*.

"Field!" I repeated innocently, "what—where—a review, or battle-field?"

"Nonsense. I mean that the best meet of the year is expected to-morrow."

"Oh—h! I beg pardon. *I* have given up hunting. It involves early rising: besides, the glare of the morning sun is too much for my eyes."

"What *do* you do in town?" she asked; "you must ride, drive, or something of the sort."

“ I ride in the Ring in Hyde Park when the weather permits, which means perhaps six days in the year. I *did* drive once, and have had a disabled finger ever since, although I protected myself with four pairs of gloves.”

Here some one across the table asked to take wine with me ; and having remarked that Miss Mary Turville patronised both beer and wine, I put but a small quantity of Sauterne in my glass, which I just sipped in acknowledgment, and then caused it to be filled up with water, giving my fair neighbour the benefit of an aside—

“ The fact is, the custom of taking anything potent at a table where ladies are present is a barbarous one. Don’t you agree with me ? ”

“ Perhaps I should if I had your delicate nerves,” she replied with a haughty smile.

“ Not that wine flushes me more than other men if I do not exceed my two glasses,” I continued, quite unmoved by her sarcasm.

Here the general conversation turned upon the beauty and variety of the walks round the

Park. Excursions were talked of to Quorndon, Beaumanor, Roecliff, &c.

“ You should enlist Mr. Marston for a party to Pelder Tor or Mount St. Bernard, Mary,” said her mother.

“ Indeed, I should be too happy of your society,” I said affectedly; “ but I am afraid I should not contribute much to your amusement. ’Tis such an utter destruction of comfort to walk up hill, and I am so little in the way of that kind of fatigue that I feel quite *gauche* at it.”

“ You have bad health, I fear,” said the good-natured Miss Turville, commiseratingly.

“ Not exactly that. Perhaps it is because I am sitting opposite a dish of cucumbers, and the powerful odour always overpowers me to faintness.”

“ I suppose you have inherited that dislike,” said Mrs. Turville. “ There is scarcely a family of long standing without a remarkable bias or prejudice for or against some food or substance inherited from sire to son. You remember Queen Elizabeth’s horror of leather.”

“ Mr. Marston is like my aunt’s lapdog, fed on boiled sweetbreads and milk, and carried about on a litter, I believe,” exclaimed Miss Mary. “ I do think you would be afraid of walking on the lawn lest a grasshopper should pop up.”

“ The dew and damp of the grass is what I should more likely fear. In fact, altogether country pleasures are sadly misnamed ; town is the only resort for the fastidious,” I replied obtusely.

Breeding is after all but conventional ; the politeness of one age is the barbarism of another. How natural are our present race of fine ladies and gentlemen, compared with those of twenty years back ! Eyes half shut—speech of lisping drawl—voices whose subdued murmur did not penetrate above half an inch of the most porous atmosphere, and which were altogether extinguished in a November fog—attitudes as forced as those of a Dresden ware shepherdess—were then the necessary concomitants of the fine *ladies* of St. James’s of both sexes. I scarcely therefore exaggerated

the taste of the day by transforming myself into an egregious ass.

The *coup de grace*, however, was to be given at any hazard ; so, making myself up for the charge, I replied to some remarks of my *promessa*, that “one naturally spent more money in town than one had.”

“And pray,” asked the lady, with assumed *naïveté*, “how does one contrive to pay it?”

“Don’t pay,” said I, “it’s *mauvais ton*—anything rather than accommodate dirty mechanics.”

“Suppose they insist,” she urged ; “what then?”

“Suicide,” I rejoined, with *nonchalance*, “suicide, or setting up as a ready money tailor.”

“Do you think it necessary to make a fool of *me*?” said she.

“Certainly not,” I replied ; “you need no such service at my hands.”

“Is it the fashion,” she asked, “to behave like a brute to a lady?”

“Not to a *lady*,” I replied; and that finished it.

She regarded me for a moment with utter disgust; and then, turning her back upon me, closed act the second of my *matrimonio obligato*.

CHAPTER II.

“ FEST UND TREU.”

A Leicestershire Esquire's home and household—A domestic museum—Cultivating comfort and cordiality, *above par*—The hero and veritable Tom—Old Tom: regular cream of the valley—A taste of the supernatural—A prophetess of the revolution, Mademoiselle Le Normand—A waif of the wonderful.

“ Happy's the wooing,
That's not long a doing.”

Old Saw.

“ She might have learnt to cuckold, jilt, and sham,
Had Covent Garden been at Surinam.”

CONGREVE.

“ Hast thou given credit to vain predictions of men, to
dreams or fortune-tellers, or gone about to know any secret
things by lot?”

DOPPA's *Rule for Devotion.*

CHAPTER II.

Although I was the only child of Christian parents, they made no scruple, it will be seen, to hand me over, body and soul, to Mr. Thomas Longueville, for the lucre of gold. Thus uncle Tom may be said to have received, in consideration of the promise that I should become his heir, all that was mortal and immortal of me, as discount for his post-obit.

No doubt, as regarded those who made the bargain, it was what they call upon 'Change a heavy premium for money, but the liberality of the discounter let me off better than could be expected. My mother's brother, to whom I was turned over, albeit the ideal of a *bon vivant*, continued to pass a tolerable happy

life with a decent heart under his ribs, in despite of the French axiom which declares “ pour bien vivre il faut un mauvais cœur, et un bon estomac.”

Early knowledge of his peculiarities convinced me that, though eccentric, he was of a kind spirit ; and later experience induced a belief that his palate was not the only susceptible part about him. His theory of the female character, in reference to the *youthful* portion of the sex, was of the species called “ transcendental.”

This bias of his philosophy he did not exhibit after the wont of most elderly gentlemen with protuberant ventricles and without calves to their legs, that is to say, by chucking under their chins all such errant damoisels as fortune may throw in their way, his practical developments never exceeding certain high-flown ideas, broached before his particular friends (ever after his particular Madeira), touching woman’s perfection, to be found only in the lays of the Troubadours.

My knowledge of this (weakness I was go-

ing to say) amiable trait served as a talisman in all my difficulties. I had only to volunteer, when I wanted money, either to sacrifice myself to a girl I abhorred, or refuse her because I found it impossible to love, to insure a present supply. If the old gentleman's digestion happened to be good at the moment, he would say to the latter announcement—

“Hyde, that's noble—shews your sense of delicacy and honour. How much do you want to stop that horsemonger's mouth?” Or, if his bile was out of order, he would probably observe,

“Sir, you want me to furnish you with an excuse for being a rascal. What, rob a woman, and call it marrying? Better pick my pocket — there is a fifty pound note in it; not above stealing such a trifle as that, it may be.”

Thus, if I made a woman the stalking-horse, I was secure to “bag” him, and I was indifferent about the means, so that I had the money.

Morning succeeded the catastrophe of my

wooing, as related in the last chapter, and I was *tête-à-tête* with my podagrous mentor in his dressing-room, where I found him breaking his fast as independent of gout as the colossus of Rhodes. Besides the usual appliances of the morning meal, the table was furnished with game pies, potted fish, and all manner of savoury German compounds, the particular item under discussion at the instant being a most oleaginous stew, flavoured with sour kraut.

His temper, when he began to eat, was none of the sweetest, there is reason for believing; but, probably on the principle of two negatives making an affirmative, the two acids left him tolerably composed. He bade me the courtesies common to an ante-meridian meeting, with an excellent grace; inquired if it quite suited my idea of what was correct to partake of char in a preserved state before noon, or whether I should like a sweetbread boiled in milk."

How the affair of the boiled sweetbreads reached him I could not guess; but, as he

evidently was in possession of the general events of the past evening, I cared not how minutely the particulars might have come to his knowledge. After we had eaten, he rose from out of his cushions, and, passing an arm through mine, said,

“As I suppose our sojourn here will not be a very long one (you had better order the carriage in an hour), I'll hobble myself a little into the tastes of this interesting family. What a pestilent practice is that of dry-rubbing floors intended for human transit : hold me fast, for a fall here would break me into pieces like a China dish.”

We passed first from his chamber into a sort of gallery, hung about with banners and deadly machines, no doubt borne by the grim cavaliers, scowling in canvass from the walls, when they were in the flesh. Beneath a horrible-looking old caitiff, with the face of a wolf, there stood a ghastly instrument, in form of a two-edged sword, evidently of eastern manufacture. The handle was a skull mounted in silver, and behind it was a tablet to inform

the curious that it was taken by the gentleman with the lupus countenance from a certain Saxon bishop, whom he cut down at the head of his flock in the *melée* at Hastings against William the Conqueror.

In like manner, he went on reading the "History of England," written in similar hieroglyphics. Here might be seen the shaft that smote his son, William of the carrots—termed Rufus by tongues polite; there memorable mementoes of the annals of the Red and White Roses, until the houses of York and Lancaster were amalgamated in that mirror of monarchy, Henry VIII.

Nor did the royal trophies of the gallery end here; there was a singular-looking instrument, resembling a currycomb, which tradition reported to have been introduced into England soon after the demise of Elizabeth—probably as an accompaniment to the Scotch fiddle brought in by her successor, James I.; a set of curious receipts for making honest women, being the original patents of nobility bestowed by Charles II. on certain

ladies suspect of fame, who thereby were enabled to bequeath to our times a posterity, all of whom are right honourable men and matrons ; and the pouncet-box, said to have been borne by William III. at the battle of the Boyne, as a precaution in the event of his coming to close quarters with King James.

The museum was also furnished with articles of historical virtù of later date. The collection was miscellaneous, but interesting ; containing, among other remarkable relics, the identical snuffers wherewith Lord Camelford extinguished the journeyman tailor, at old Slaughter's coffee-house ; the green pea which Brummel having unsuccessfully chased around his plate, induced that eminent philosopher to decide against all future attempts at vegetable diet ; and the embroidered handkerchief which the great Lord Chesterfield was seen to apply to his eyes, on hearing it suggested that wigs and ruffles might one day cease to give assurance of a gentleman.

As these *reliquia*, however, did not much affect the old gentleman, and as, for myself, I

never had a taste for such illustrations of the past, I deposited my companion outside the house to cultivate the Dryads, while I sought the stables for the purpose of a recreation in natural history, aided by a meditative cigar.

The state of the stud almost repented me of the hurry I was in to renounce the daughter of the house. The style of hunter peculiar to a first-rate Leicestershire stable has not improved during the last five-and-twenty years. He is a higher-bred animal, but without the substance and character that stamp a horse of sterling sporting currency.

The squire, of the fine Christian name, Mr. Beaulieu Turville, had an unexceptionable team for the field—not such highflyers as may now be seen at the Ram's Head, or Oadby Gate—but great stalwart steeds, with furlongs of stride, and power to get *through* a bullfinch, which nothing but a bird could get *over*. One, an inconceivable roan mare, with legs all white up to the knees and houghs, and a pair of wall-eyes in her head, might have justified a lover of woodcraft for mating with

Medusa, had the Gorgon brought the palfrey as part of her dowry. It was great virtue therefore on my part that enabled me to turn my back upon Turville Park, with no expression beyond a sigh breathed as the carriage whirled through the gates, that I could not marry the squire's mare instead of his daughter.

Uncle Tom also appeared to have something on his mind. Old Turville — thus, I suppose, one is to designate a *pater familias*, however green the autumn of his life—was an especial favourite with him. They had been companions during a long season of travel (probably for the grand tour, the fashionable crusade of the last century), and young Longueville had, it should seem, been saved from the stiletto of some *signorina*, or the rapier of some *hidalgo*, by the courage and devotion of his friend.

“Give me a cigar, Hyde,” he began, as we *débouched* upon the high road for Leicester; “give me a cigar. This new fashion of tobacco is convenient; modern fashions are all

more convenient than were those of yore: it was fit that pipes should cease to be the appurtenances of gentlemen as well as the swords they were accustomed to stick by their sides, for no purpose but to get between their legs."

The worst enemies of smoking cannot deny that it is a social habit. People don't read while they perpetrate it, neither do they exercise instruments of music. It leads to nothing that kills conversation; on the contrary, it opens the mouth naturally, and when the portals of speech are unclosed, it is odds that "out flies a trope," or some small change of discourse. Thus, after a few preliminary puffs, my uncle again spoke out.

"When you left me, I was joined by Beau-lieu and his wife, who were going to the dairy (their cows are great creatures); and as it was a good opportunity to break to them the sudden necessity for our return to town (Beau-lieu drinks port-wine, and is apt at offence) I joined them. Found it a little marble palace, and the dairy-maid, a spinster of four-

score, who was born in the family, and had already buried three generations.

“ ‘ Here in cool grot’ I vamped up some excuse that appeared to satisfy them ; but I am far from being content with the issue of the excursion. I cannot quarrel with the determination you are acting upon. In the belief that you could not make a woman happy, you would be a rascal to espouse her. Still I feel like a fool in the transaction, to which one may express a disinclination without being considered over-fastidious.”

I listened to the speaker, not without my doubts that he was too reasonable to be in his senses. He looked in earnest, however, and as it was just possible a man might be overtaken by a sudden fit of amiability as well as the palsy, I was too well satisfied with the effect to be particular about the cause.

We got on famously to the George — the best sample of an English inn that ever existed between the Land's-end and the (occasional) rising up of our insular sun — and as Tom Longueville had sense enough to esti-

mate such a convenience, we halted at Leicester for the night.

Foremost among the social virtues stands the quality of being *facile à vivre*. Being in my grand climacteric, I may, without fear of becoming compromised, assert that it is a better foundation for home and happiness than love; but leaving the ladies out of the case, in a companion it is, beyond comparison, more excellent than wit or wassail, “learning or good estate.”

Tom Longueville was the superlative of capital in this respect, after dinner. At that period when, according to Shakspeare, all men have “suppler souls,” his heart was as soft and his spirits as accommodating as a patent hair cushion. Dinner over, his rosy face grew deeper still in hue, his eyes beaming complacency; he threw himself back in his chair, and establishing his pumps and black silk stockings on a stool, instituted a gossip something like to this intent—

“Hyde, I am — that is to say, I was an hour ago — annoyed by your tardiness, and

the *contretems* of fate, that our marriage scheme has come to nought. Perhaps there may be a spice of selfishness in this, for I have more than one cause for desiring the friendship between your father-in-law-that-was-to-be and myself should survive all worldly influences. I never told you the origin of our acquaintance, and as the present is a convenient opportunity, call for coffee and your cigar-case, and you shall have it."

If teetotalism had been in force in the days of Sterne, and Fielding, and Smollett, they would never have left us such pleasant old men as they have. Uncle Tom, with a cigar and a decanter of Madeira, would have stood comparison with my uncle Toby with his tankard and pipe: in his "monk-like fasts" he was far from a flattering sample of the virtue of living without cakes and ale. The coffee having arrived, not without its *aid-de-camp*, a graceful flask of orthodox *chasse*, amid the incense of the fragrant weed, thus his converse ran—

"At that epoch when our gay friends over

the water were cutting each other's throats for the promotion of civil and religious liberty, I met Beaulieu Turville in Paris. Subsequently, and as soon as it was permitted, we left France together, and in an affair at Madrid I became indebted to him for life. But it is of an incident that occurred before our departure from its metropolis that I would now speak.

“ We were returning homewards from an interview with Mirabeau, the hero of the hour, commenting with the latitude of youth on the appearance of his celebrated *Sophie*, then resident with him, when a girl accosted us, asking some trivial question—the name of the street, I believe. With the exception of a bonnet, she wore the garb of a second class *grisette*.

“ As she spoke, I was struck by the brief but piercing glance with which she regarded us—her eyes gleaming as brightly as little stars ; otherwise she was plain and uninteresting, very short, and as thin as a reed. Having answered her question courteously, we were

about to pass on, when she placed a hand on my arm.

“ ‘ You are English,’ she said, in a pure Parisian accent; ‘ what if I knew as much of your future as of your past fortunes—would you be as *au fait* to one as the other?’

“ Laughingly I answered that ‘ if she could prove her knowledge of what had befallen us, we should the more readily believe in her Cuman properties.’

“ ‘ Even so let it be,’ she replied, and turning to my companion, asked him to withdraw the glove from his left hand. Scarce looking into its palm, she observed, ‘ Your early pursuit has been wood-craft — *plus chasseur que galant*—but love will do more for you than the hunting field.’

“ As she spoke we continued to walk with her, till, stopping before a mean-looking house, she observed, ‘ This is my home — will you venture beyond its threshold?’

“ The cave of the sybil was a room on the *rez-de-chaussée* of a dingy house, in a street contiguous to the *Rue de Tournon*. It bore

some few manifestations of the craft of the occupant; for though the furniture of the apartment was scant and homely, each of its four sides was ornamented with a mirror of a large size. Having demanded and received a fee for the farce she was about to enact, she held my hand for a moment, and then soliloquised.

“ ‘ *Jeune sage, vieil etourdi*—love, the boy’s folly, will be the old man’s fate—ere the altar is reached shall the stroke fall: such is the fashion of the sacrifice.’

* * * *

“ I give you my portion of the prediction only as a commentary on the mixture of fact and falsehood that so often characterizes modern soothsaying. The bulk of my friend’s fortune he derives from a marriage formed within a year of the day in which it was foretold that such chance awaited him. I am not likely to become either a golden or a sacrificial calf. Our Parisian Cassandra was the expelled Benedictine *pensionnaire*, the celebrated prophetess of the Revolution, *Mademoiselle Le Normand*.”

Within the last few years several startling instances of that extraordinary woman's skill in vaticination have been made public, on authorities that seem to establish them beyond the possibility of question. The above is no sketch of imagination : it occurred under the precise circumstances which I have related. Reason may turn from it scornfully ; but " there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

CHAPTER III.

THE WIGHT.

The hero disappears from the scene, which changes to “the back of the Wight,” as the islanders call its more remote shores — Yarmouth — Alum Bay — Gadshill — Atherfield Green — Madame de Beauplans — The stranger’s home — Another stranger of the class common to Fielding, Smollett, and such like casuists — He comports himself in keeping — A grilled fowl, a Meerschaum, and a beaker of Hollands, to close a chapter.

“Insula parva situ—sed rebus maxima gestis.”

“It is an isle
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise.”

SHELLEY.

“Island of bliss! among the subject seas.”

THOMSON.

“An elegant sufficiency—content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Progressive virtue, and approving heaven.”

Ibid.

CHAPTER III.

I remember to have met with the following passage in a fashionable author, who was probably describing his own case:—"When the whole enjoyment of the day is to eat and drink, and sleep, and talk, and visit, life becomes a burden too heavy to be supported." This is so much the fact that the only danger is, it may be regarded as a harsh truth.

The prospects of the rich man are by no means placed in a flattering point of view in holy writ, yet his instant condition is little better. "Live on sixpence a day, and earn it," appears a very apocryphal recipe for happiness, in his eyes whose destiny is to rise up early to toil; but did he know the dark de-

spairs of *ennui*, the fiendlike tortures of indigestion, and the piecemeal perishings of a life of ease, he would learn to estimate aright the excellence of the birthright to which they are born who live by the sweat of the brow.

This knowledge—one of the best fruits of philosophy—is, however, ripened only by experience, which accounts for the flavour of its early specimens being so little relished. I am here speaking of the rich man of mature age ; youth, whatever its condition, is not to be measured by any standard. At puberty we swallow with impunity those substitutes for granite—Norfolk dumplings—and survive the horrors of a haggis ; and I have seen an Eton symposium, whose revellers were all sprigs of the finest quality, whereat the rum and milk was quaffed from out a utensil which, like the chest of drawers in the “Deserted Village,” “contrived a double debt to pay.”

Now, my *bon vivant* uncle was, as I have shown, a capital companion upon the eat, drink, and be merry system, contenting himself after having fed, “like any other *swine* ;”

but taken in the morning he was not so palatable. In fact, he bore his forenoons, as Byron says the human stomach is wont to carry vegetables, "in a grumbling way"—so grumblingly indeed, that without being very undutiful I might have called it grunting.

Poor fellow! I did pity him as he growled down three cups of green tea on the following morning, and snarled up a handsome segment of a perigord pie; but, nevertheless, I grew tired of the murmuring stream, and so got rid of him when the meal was finished, chartering a yellow post-chaise to convey me to Loughborough, so soon as I had packed him in his travelling carriage, and addressed it to Cheltenham. And thus (but not, as I trust, in a like manner), the reader and the biographer are about to be separated for a space.

* * * *

When *supreme bon ton* condescends to visit that Eden of the western wave which mortals call the Isle of Wight, it abideth at Cowes, or haply Ryde; but when fashion goes to

town for the season, you do not find it settled in Whitechapel. Nevertheless, estimated by the scale of Nature, the northern and southern shores of that lovely islet bear the relation towards each other which, according to the standard of style, Shoreditch does to St. James's.

At the extreme western point of the island are the rocks so well known as the Needles, and beneath the promontory whose boundary they constitute is a creek where, when winds breathe soft, sparkle waters more lucent and bright than ever bathed the pearl. The name of this fairy harbour is Alum Bay; the approach to it is a lawn of the most exquisite verdure, descending with a graceful sweep from the adjoining table-land for about half a mile.

At the present hour it is a spot of almost matchless tranquil beauty, but at the period to which my tale refers it was as lone and solitary as a valley of the Himalayas. The only habitation it contained was a fisherman's hut, buried within a small copse of

dwarf oaks that clothed the foot of the High Down.

One evening, early in the autumn, a lady who alighted at Yarmouth from a splendid equipage, engaged a boy as a guide to Alum Bay, and left the town with him on foot, and without any other attendant. In a few days afterwards a person arrived from London, bringing with him a number of workmen; and it was presently rumoured in the neighbouring hamlet of Freshwater, that a great lady had purchased the lease of the fisherman's cottage, and was building a fine house in its stead.

The first part of the report was true, but the substitute for the cottage was a very unpretending edifice. It was a villa, containing several rooms indeed, but all on the ground floor; while apart, and at some distance, was a building in which the servants were to reside, and where all the business of the household was to be carried on.

About the middle of September the new tenant took possession, and it became known

that she was a widow from abroad, and very wealthy. Her train, though not numerous, consisted of domestics such as are found only in establishments of the highest class, and their equipment bespoke the luxurious and expensive habits of the mistress they served. The lady appeared young and beautiful, but she rarely was to be seen, and kept aloof from all association with the neighbours of any condition. The want of roads around her abode furnished a courteous excuse for not visiting, and the details of the household were exclusively managed by a steward. The few who gained admission to the stranger reported her to be reserved in manner, somewhat haughty in her bearing, and as having surrounded herself with every appliance of refinement that the most courtly taste could suggest.

In a situation an anchorite might have chosen, suddenly appeared the bower of a lady, fair and rich, whence fragrance and melody breathed, and where luxury and refinement were the presiding spirits. Such are the

changes we read of in Oriental fables as brought about by some potent enchanter, and that we occasionally witness in our own days, achieved by the great modern magician—Gold!

As a retreat from the hurry of life, with the privilege of freedom from observation, and the enjoyment of a delicious climate amid scenery of rare loveliness, England has no region that will bear comparison with the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. On the Downs, that trend to the westward, you can wander for days without encountering a human being; and such of the peasantry as may fall in your way betray none of the inquisitive spirit so common among those who dwell apart from their fellows.

A natural courtesy—haply the effect of the ease of their position, and the civilized character of the district in which their lot is cast—distinguishes the rural population of this happy island. It has been well said, that in nature there is nothing vulgar; and I should not desire a better illustration of the theory

than to see a batch of Gravesend cockneys turned loose among the rustics doing homage to May-day at Godshill village, or on Atherfield green.

The recluse of Alum Bay—if her object were a separation from the world, such as art has made it, and a communion with it where man has not yet succeeded in distorting nature—selected well, and soon appeared to feel that she had done so. The shepherd who was sometimes abroad would find his flock formed into a solid square, gazing upon a figure already in the distance, whose approach had aroused their fears, and long after sunset had ceased to light the Downs to seaward, he became aware that the wild track which led him to his home was also trodden by another.

The small hamlet of Freshwater, which consisted of about a dozen cottages of the humblest kind, was the only attempt at gregariousness exhibited by the colonists of the neighbourhood. There occasionally a matron peasant would prate to her gossips of the great foreign lady ; but, save such casual allu-

sion, the career of the stranger was suffered to proceed without note or comment. So scant was the population, and so limited their wants, that beyond their daily bread they needed nothing while health was vouchsafed them. In sickness or any casual distress, they found ready aid and ample relief in the liberal kindness of the lady of Alum Bay, whose hand was ever open as the day, whatever the motive of her charity.

“Whom does Time gallop withal,” of those who drive the quill? Not with your dramatist, whose pace is never graceful unless it keep due measure. There are, doubtless, some worthy exceptions to the rule of the unities in dramatic composition; but, sadly fallen as the art of the playwright is, I cannot but respect the fabricator of modern theatrical exhibitions, who, however little indebted to the muse, seldom taxes the credulity of his audience to the extent of accompanying him, in the shifting of a drop, from Paris to Pekin, or to conclude that a couple of centuries intervene between the fall and rise of the act-scene.

To the writer of fiction much license belongs that cannot be allowed its exhibitor. How many a drama, which in representation not only revolts our reason, but outrages our patience, in the perusal affords unalloyed delight! How excellent to read is "The Comedy of Errors!" and yet, is it not an insult to the audience of a theatre to require that they shall not be able to distinguish Dromio of Ephesus, with a snout like the proboscis of an elephant, from Dromio of Syracuse, with no more nose than a chimpanzee?

The novelist is one "whom Time does gallop withal," and to whom a liberal ubiquity of place is also permitted. For this reason I have associated the reader with Madame de Beauplans, at her villa in the Isle of Wight, without putting him to the fatigue of a journey from the Rue Rivoli to Osborne's hotel in the Adelphi, and a narrative of the arrangements that preceded her insular settlement.

But because of this facility of scene and

season it behoves us especially not to fall into any security respecting our *dramatis personæ*. The practice of this commendable perspicuity has drawn upon many an unfortunate weaver of Parnassus the charge of being prosaic and tedious ; but (always with a proper keeping of bounds) while the laconic best becomes the dialogue of a drama, the circumbendibus is compulsory in your fashionable novel of action and sentiment.

The Goth who should despatch a bay-window confab at White's, in a couplet or two from the vocabulary of compliments, or a *tête-à-tête* between her Grace of Muchgableton and the Baroness de Plusparoles, with a question and rejoinder, would deserve to be perpetual secretary to a non-intermittent general council of a national association, everlastingly sitting, speculating, and speechifying, "*de cunctis rebus et quibusdam aliis.*"

Your compiler of memoirs is in an intermediate state between the play-writer and novelist. It is optional to his purpose and his taste either to make his readers abruptly ac-

quainted with his persons and places, or to bring about the familiarity by easy stages. In short he is a free agent in ink, and doeth, or may do, as it seemeth best to his judgment or his humour. His characters tell their own stories, long or short, or he is their mouth-piece : they come to the reader, or the reader is forwarded to them, and he is introduced to them either at fifteen or fifty. Still this license must not be abused till it becomes licentiousness.

Your biographer may choose his own time and place for the introduction ; but it is not lawful for him to effect it in masquerade, and therefore it is imperative upon me no longer to leave unsaid who Madame de Beauplans, the island recluse, may be.

Fortune took it into her head about the same period to select, for no very obvious reasons, three young women on whom to lavish her favours with romantic prodigality. The first of these was an actress, &c., &c., of the name of Mellon, who became Duchess of St. Albans ; the second was a charity girl, by

name Dawes, subsequently Baroness de Feucheres, and bosom friend of the Duc de Bourbon; the third, Madame de Beauplans, the wife of the French banker, *née* Caroline G——.

The banker survived his marriage but a short season—probably his happiness was too much for him (matrimonial felicity is a serious affair)—and dying, left behind him the richest, and consequently the most bewitching widow in Paris. Ill-natured people, when they heard how the relict of the *millionaire* mourned her lord, would talk about the wife of Ephesus; but we are full of charity, and hold our peace anent any such hints. Madame de Beauplans however disappointed both the Parisian gossips and gallants: after expending only sufficient time in the French metropolis to arrange with her late husband's partners, and place herself in the position of head of the firm of "Beauplans and Co.," she took her departure *en princesse* for England.

The reasons for this step, and those that followed so fast upon it, are not easily divined; indeed the latter seem wholly unac-

countable. At the moment in which the summit of her ambition is gained, this woman of wayward fortunes hastens from the scene of her triumph, and divesting herself of the agency of wealth, in the only character for which she ever cared for it—as the instrument of her vanity—she rejects all the pomp and circumstance of life for solitude and separation from the world. Like one who, in his wantonness having scaled some giddy height, pauses on its top only to recover breath for his descent, so soon as riches and power are in her grasp, she is seen adopting the most direct means to strip them of all their *eclat*.

The object of her visit to London was kept a profound secret from those who were about her. A hotel of no pretension was chosen for her residence, and after a few days, consumed apparently in business with her city agents, she left town, accompanied by a single servant, for the Isle of Wight. The result of that excursion has been already told; and in the recluse of the island glen—in the strange foreign lady—we have found one

whose career will at least point a moral, if haply it may not adorn a tale.

Autumn came and went; winter passed, and spring again brought verdure and blossom, but no change had affected the tranquil routine of the little colony at Alum Bay. Charity and benevolence were ever active there; but all else was bound in deep stillness. The turf on which the cottage and offices stood, as on a rich carpet, was as Nature had spread it, save that, where a small conservatory connected with the single sitting-room opened upon it, a few rustic baskets were scattered, in which the early vernal flowers were growing luxuriantly, and told of careful culture.

But with this simplicity there mingled no inattention to the elegancies of a perfect *ménage*. The attendants that answered the peasants who, few and far between, called for some domestic purpose, were appointed with that exquisite neatness and absence of all ornament which distinguish the household where true taste reigns. The mistress of this

unique establishment was still to be met in her walks over the green downs, or on the margin of the wild cliffs that overhang the ocean, hundreds of feet above its bed, enveloped in a mantle of rare furs or costly velvet.

But the colour of her habit was as sober as her demeanour: the rustic who saluted her had his civility acknowledged with a courtesy as full of humility as his own; and his request, did he prefer one, answered in a tone as sweet as the reply was considerate. Thus did one, who bore within her a spirit fierce as a volcano, appear among men, with a mien gentle as slumbering infancy; and thus did men, as their wont is, regard the gifts that abundance casts out from its excess as the offerings of charity — that only mortal attribute with aught of the divinity within it which inclines our hearts to love our neighbours better than ourselves.

The days had not yet arrived wherein the sons and daughters of fashion were accustomed to seek health and pleasure among the valleys, downs, and shores of the Wight.

It was still spring, harsh with wild March winds, when a traveller entered the little ale-house, which was the only place of public entertainment in the hamlet of Freshwater. He was alone—unless a large Newfoundland dog that followed at his heels might be called a companion—and carried a knapsack on his shoulders. Still even the host of this most simple of taverns, who admitted him, was aware it was no common tramper he had for a guest, and the request to be shown into a room was complied with, by the door of the parlour (which was also the best bed-room) being opened to him.

A fire of drift-wood was soon sparkling on the hearth; a creature-comfort presently followed, in a capital attempt at a grilled fowl, and a stone jug whose contents proved the artist to have been a professor in the science of amalgamating alcohol and juniper. There never was better Hollands smuggled—which is as much as to say, it was as good as ever was tasted. There is something in the laws of excise and customs fatal to the spirit—of

distillation : who ever heard of whisky which had paid the duty, that was worth the room it would take up in a gentleman's stomach ?

Our traveller, though his first appearance was not particularly prepossessing—cold and hunger are not the best promoters of good humour—grew more gracious as he fed and drank ; and having disposed of the poultry summarily, and overlaid it with several strata of toasted cheese and rye bread similarly prepared, with a peculiarly condescending suavity he demanded of the landlady, who was removing the matters which were left, (that is to say, the knives and forks and crockery), “whether her husband would join him in a glass of grog and a pipe?”

It was a common practice in the last century (*vide* Fielding, Smollett, &c., &c., *passim*) for the wayfarer in lack of company to betake him to the forlorn hope of his landlord, with a pot and pipe to get up the steam of his communication. As the region was remote, and in topography little less than a hundred years behind the currency of the road, our

traveller probably had recourse to the ancient usage; at all events, whatever the cause, the effect was, that having discussed his dinner with a hearty goodwill, drawing his chair towards the hearth, and flinging a fresh faggot on the fire, he sat him down with great complacency to his host and Hollands.

CHAPTER IV.

THE “CHINE.”

Jacob Lyell and his guest—A conversation in the pumping line—Working to windward of an old shark—“Belay that”—A right understanding—The smuggler communicative—Suspicious—Anxious, and what came of his anxiety—A dash of the terrific.

“Fœcundi calices quem non fecêre disertum?”

HORAT.

“Call'st thou me host?

Now by this hand, I swear, I scorn the term.”

Ancient Pistol.

“Help me, ye baneful birds, whose shrieking sound
Is sign of dreary death, my deadly cries
Most ruthfully to tune.”

CHAPTER IV.

We left our *dramatis personæ* setting about their evening sacrifice after the approved custom; that is to say, with incense and libation. The high priest—in shape of the landlord—having approached the altar (a circular oaken tripod) and made his obeisance, straightway ignited his censer (a tube of Dutch origin), and poured forth the offering, a mixture known to the amphibious as “half-water-grog.”

The stranger did likewise—in the matter of the mundungus—by means of a considerable *ecume de mer* which he extracted from his knapsack, and filling a Christian dose of Hollands and water, he bade his host be

seated. I have said that this personage appeared “in shape of the landlord;” he shall be introduced with every respect for his proportions.

Among the many varieties of architecture in which nature indulges when designing our earthly tabernacles, that which likes me least — fortunately it is not a common style — is when she contrives to bestow the materials of a castle upon a cottage. There is something to my seeming very shocking in the “too too solid flesh” of such a man as Scott has drawn in his “Black Dwarf.” When the giant proposed to be extended to nine feet is curtailed of his destined elongation, and an end put to his perpendicular proceedings when an altitude of five feet nothing has been attained, he forthwith sprouts into all manner of corporeal exuberances. His arms take a caudatory course, and vegetate downwards; his shoulders exhibit the decisive victory of a square of right angles over an oblong; his legs “would make a chairman stare;” and his nose is like nothing known in

the way of frontal appendage, except a rhinoceros's horn.

It had pleased the moulder of our porcelain to deal in this wise with the clay out of which she had made up our Boniface of Freshwater. Had you seen him, you would have imagined him two single gentlemen rolled into one—or rather half a score—should you guage mankind by the cockney standard. Nature having thus made him a Colossus of sixty inches, he lost no time in case-hardening his handiwork. As soon as he was able “to get his live lumber under weigh”—as he was wont to express himself——But he shall grace his own tale, without our pitchforking the reader into the middle of it, as if he had fallen upon an epic.

“Draw a chair near the hearth, landlord,” said the stranger, as soon as his guest had set fire to his pipe and alcohol to his horn; “draw a chair to the hearth. These March evenings are plaguy raw—here's Bo'swain, notwithstanding he was reared in 50 degrees of north latitude, with his paws in the embers.”

“Never cold—obliged to *you* all the same,”

replied the individual (there is no dual in English) addressed ; “ ever since my anchor was first a-trip I’ve made hard weather of it, *I* can tell you.”

“ That’s no reason you should n’t make fair weather of it now,” urged the advocate of a warm berth ; “ that is precisely what should incline you not to refuse the goods the god’s offer.”

“ Ain’t had a chance of that ere sort, never,” rejoined the portable essence of humanity ; “ nobody never offered me nothing—not so much as a quid of tobacco—since I knew how to stow one away, and that’s some time, *I* can tell you.”

“ You’re a native of this island ?” asked the stranger.

“ Ay, ay, sir, born’d and bred not a cable’s length from where you’re a-setting.”

“ Some portion of your life I see has been passed in the navy—in the merchant service ?”

“ Afloat since I was able to get my live lumber under weigh, sir—here’s better luck

to us both, sir—Hollands *is* pretty drinking ; yes, sir, been a trader, as a body may say.”

“ And don’t you find your sea-going habits hard to shake off? Do you never feel inclined for a run now and then, when things are dull ashore?”

Stout as our Hercules was, he appeared at this moment to be overtaken by a weakness, which caused the horn of grog he was lifting to its destination to fall from his hand. Recovering himself, however, by an effort, he seized the stone jar that was standing at the stranger’s elbow, and, draining it into his stoup, flung the contents down his throat ; and then, in a most emphatic tone, replied “ No, nothing of the sort—*there’s too many sharks about.*”

At first the idea struck the entertainer that his guest had lapsed into drink—by no means an unwarrantable conclusion, seeing that a stone bottle of ardent spirits had been discussed, whereof his own share was a solitary tumbler. A slight examination of his *vis-à-vis*, however, at once satisfied him that he

was mistaken, for, instead of any symptoms of intoxication appearing, even the old sailor had disappeared, and in his stead there sat before him the statue of a burly dwarf, in granite — a stupendous image in crystallized vinegar.

After a short pause and silence, not holding that the metamorphosis of which he was a witness ought of right to interfere with his own proper convenience, he rose from his seat, and, having opened the door, courteously demanded the landlady to furnish another vessel of Hollands.

Had the stranger come to the resolution that the shape before him was that of a mountainous puppet, whose moving principle was the spirit of juniper, no one could have blamed his logic. The last words of the request were not out of his mouth, when the statue became instinct with lusty life, and, rushing to the door, shouted forth, “ There ain’t no more Hollands in the house, not a toothful ; is there none of the rum left we had from Newport last week ? ”

“Bring any liquor you have got,” said the new-comer to the uneasy-looking woman, who peered into the room in answer to all these orders and counter-orders, and, as she replenished the table, he thus continued—his guest standing irresolute whether to go or stay—“I comprehend your mistake, my friend; you take me for an exciseman; you might as well have confounded me with the parson of the parish. I have nothing to do with things spiritual.”

“If so be as how,” began to stammer out the fellow, who, taken aback by his fears, had for a moment lost the natural and acquired keenness of perception, that as instantly returned and set him right, “If so be the gentleman would forgive the lubberly look-out”—

“No more fouling,” interrupted the stranger, “but lie-to, while I speak you. I am not here as a spy upon tobaccoes and brandies; my purpose is to search for something else, that I have cause to believe is concealed in these parts. Has not a lady lately come to reside here; one who lives secluded; who does not

mix with the gentry, and is rarely seen abroad?"

"I have heard tell," began the smuggler, with characteristic caution—

"You *know*," interrupted the querist, with an expression that showed he would not brook an attempt at trifling—"you know there is such a person in this neighbourhood. I want you to point out how best I may gain access to her without the knowledge of her establishment, and before they can be aware of my design; put me in the way to do this, and you shall be paid."

If mankind could be made aware of the exceeding convenience that attends plain speaking, as well to those who act as those who suffer, the periphrasis would cease to be a figure of elocution.

"Why did n't you ease your helm and give her way at once?" exclaimed the amphibious Boniface. "Now she goes—all full; I hate man or craft lying-to. Want to get at the French madam up at Alum yonder? could n't have heaved line in fairer soundings;

all her mounseers smoke like volcanies ; gets their baccy here ; my lass or me takes 'em a bundle every wick as big as a frigate's fender —I'm agoin' over in the mornin'. But had n't you best look-out when she's takin' her arternoon's cruise ; sure to fall in with her about six bells, these here equinoctial days, somewhere 'twixt the signal-staff and the Needles' point."

The stranger drew his watch hastily, and, noting that the hour indicated was at hand, asked the landlord at once to put him in the direction of the place to which he alluded.

" But first," he continued, " let us chain up this rough companion of mine till I return ; he is apt to be troublesome with strangers, and I wish my interview with your new neighbour to pass without interruption."

It was a raw evening, with wind and drift from the westward ; and as they wound up the narrow path that leads from the little inlet of Freshwater to the downs above, a heavy ground-swell broke with a hollow crash upon the shingle, and against the base of the tall cliffs.

Having crossed a singular cleft in the parapet of chalk which encircles the back of the Wight, with a barrier characteristic of Albion; once over this chasm, or "chine," as the islanders call such a fissure, they stood upon the broad, wild upland that to the west flanks the isthmus which lies between Yarmouth and the Needles.

"Before you is the ground where you'll meet with the chase, unless mayhap the weather is too dirty for her to venture out. I'll leave you here: you'll have no difficulty in making the harbour again, by giving the village lights a wide berth to win'ard. Good evening!"

Thus left to himself, the stranger lost no time in taking the path pointed out, along which he strode at a rapid pace.

The smuggler, well used to adventure from the nature of his occupation, and withal a shrewd and enterprising fellow, stood for a while looking after his companion's form, as it grew less and less in the misty distance.

As I learned from him, when he related to

me the incidents detailed in this chapter, and the latter portion of that which precedes it, there was in the affair with which he had thus connected himself something that moved more than his curiosity.

Among the simple peasants of that half-desert district, strange rumours ran concerning the new settler: her wealth was talked of as a treasure beyond calculation — gold and precious jewels as things held by her in no account; while some would not hesitate to declare that she was a great princess from beyond sea.

Jacob Lyell, the master of the small hostel of Freshwater, had heard these things talked over by his guests, their marvels rising with every can of beer; and he took occasion to learn what foundation there might be for them.

He never visited Alum Bay without putting some indifferent question to the servants, whence he gathered a fragment of a fact; and a chain of these put together served to lead his clear common sense to a right under-

standing of the position of affairs. He gleaned that a lady of large possessions and high station dwelt there ; while her object in making it her home was only concealed from him because those whom he questioned were equally ignorant of it. The arrival of a stranger desirous of a secret interview with this lady—herself leading a life full of eccentricity, if not of mystery—aroused his suspicions ; and, as he turned homewards, he doubted that all was well.

In this mood, dissatisfied with what he had done, and hesitating as to how he might repair it, he slowly retraced his steps. He had reached the bend in the path that leads round the chine, described as cleaving the face of the cliffs about a quarter of a mile west of the hamlet of Freshwater, when the sound of footsteps caught his ear, by habit ever on the alert. Fitfully and but at intervals it conquered the wild war of the elements, for the sea was up in its fury, and the storm shouting around. Partly for the sake of shelter, and with the design of discovering who they might be that

were abroad in such a scene and season, he descended to a small ledge that abutted from the face of the chasm, a few feet below the surface of the cliff. Here he had thrown himself lengthways (for the surges roared and raged horribly in the desperate abyss hundreds of feet below), when he became aware that two persons were approaching rapidly.

A voice, wilder than the wild wind, conveyed every syllable it uttered as plainly as if the speaker were at his side. It was a woman's, and she spoke with a desperate energy; while, as if to avoid one who accompanied her, she walked where the extremest limit of the downs met the dark horizon to seaward.

“Never, never,” it said, in tones whose purpose could not be misinterpreted; “never again will I be the pander to your vice: God! that ever I was the participator! Go, repent; and haply the gold may not then turn to ashes in your grasp — the gold I have said you will reap from my grave.” As the last word was uttered, the speaker's foot was on the brink of the chine — the smuggler stretches forth his

hand—but the fearful move has been taken—that footstep meets only the unsubstantial air, and, crying aloud in his agony, he sees a human form from above him plunge forward into the hell of waters. * *

CHAPTER V.

AN APPARITION.

A solitary—An encounter—The working of vengeance —“I will feed fat the ancient grudge I owe you”—Self-possession — A rescue— A friend in need—Midnight and its associations—Conscience, avaunt — “Do the dead come again?”

“ But whence the deadly hate ?”

ROGERS.

“ Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return —————”

SHELLEY.

“ Yes! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees.”

Ibid.

“ I have supt full of horrors.”

SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER V.

I have lived long enough in the world to respect a good hater, on the broad principle that to do *any thing* well evinces character. The earnest mind, imbued with intense hate at one period, *may* at another be filled with love equally profound; and in much love there must needs be goodness. A reformed hater, like a promissory note, gives out a pleasant pledge for the future. On the strength of the past aversion you may build a fabric of hope—a ladder whose summit shall be the skies—for truth of mind is superiority of mind, the whole world over. The fool's result is circumstance; the strong mind conquers circumstance, and accomplishes, by its energetic volition, the designed result. Hence

the foundation of empires, hence the oracles of genius.

Caroline G——, who first gave me a practical lesson on anomaly in the form of woman, was at this period a well-jointured widow. As I have before stated, she had rejected the proffer of marriage of C——. On principle she chose the shores of her own country, whereon to practise themes of charity and self-discipline. In the balmy seclusion of the *then* unfrequented Wight, she sought to regulate her wild and storm-impelled nature. At first the peace around her, and her novel occupations, obliterated the past; but memory returned, and, like the weather-vane, fluctuated to every point of the awakened conscience:—

“ Now ’twas an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion :”

anon a turbulent abyss of despair.

During one of these latter moods, when she imagined herself delivered over to eternal reprobation, she had wandered forth to en-

counter the warring of the elements, so to soothe the worse inward struggle. Here she encountered the object of her deadly aversion—the being who had plunged her soul into its desolation. She met him who was armed with a fiend's purpose, and the heart of a bold, bad man. A desperate outcast, with no alternative (should his design fail) save death or life in bondage, he strode beside her by the margin of the Freshwater cliffs, scarcely keeping pace with the fleet foot that did but touch the short, smooth sward as it sped along, urged by ungovernable hate and dread.

Well he knew how to goad these passions, so that they should accelerate the destruction he coveted. For a time she was silent, but his sarcasms at length aroused the woman in her, and she replied by a torrent of reproach, and even of menace.

“You are soul-stained,” she said; “and I would have you begone ere you commit a murder—ay, a *murder*! To avoid you, did I not quit the world? every link to it which

could bring softness or restore sympathy? Did I not warn you that you should have my dross if I never beheld you more? You have forfeited that condition; you urge me to deeper infamy. Haunt, then, my path—blast my eyesight but a minute longer—and you hasten my perdition and your own!”

She had reached the edge of the landward chine, and the wild breeze blew her drapery with fearful force against her; she paused not, though Ridsdale had crouched to the ground by her side, to avoid the sight of the fearful chasm. But he laughed scornfully, and spoke between his teeth that they would “make a marriage of it.” It was then she uttered those last words recorded in the preceding chapter. It will, perhaps, hereafter be known whether Ridsdale’s conscience was altogether seared, or whether there yet remained a particle of manhood saved from the moral wreck; certain is it, to save or to destroy, he caught hold, for a breathless moment ere he fled, of the fluttering robe before it disappeared into the black abyss.

Promptness in emergency is the common characteristic of those bred on the sea. Forty winters of wind and storm had not hardened in vain the muscular limbs of the stalwart smuggler. For strength of nerve, he might have piled the stones of the tomb of Cheops. Simultaneous, therefore, with his involuntary cry was the stretching forth of his big and brawny arm. Nerved for the effort, it reached and grasped—not the person of Caroline, but her outer garment.

It was a rich tissue of velvet or silk, such as was her wont to wear; any other fabric would have been rent to shivers by her weight. Even that strong material partly gave way: yet it *did* sustain her. The ledge on which he lay was scarcely sufficient for his insecure resting-place. It has now altogether disappeared. Above, it may be recollected, the crag beetled over his head, so as to give shelter from the rain that now descended in misty torrents. The fissure already made would altogether give way should he attempt, he reflected, to support her and climb himself

upwards. A long leap would have placed *him*, indeed, on the same jut of the cliff by which he had descended ; from thence, with his iron force, he might have swung from crag to crag till he reached the rude steps cut in the face of the chalk rock—the path of a bold man at all times, but now, of course, rendered slippery and unsafe by the deluge.

Should he then adventure with his burthen the desperate attempt, or remain on the narrow lodgment till aid should appear and the storm had passed away ? In the latter case, the probability remained that the first movement of the woman would plunge them both downwards. In another minute, even his nerves had quailed under this calculation of chances, so he was up and doing at once : Jacob Lyell, the coarse contrabandist, risking his unlettered existence with a carelessness that had made him a hero in battle, a god in fable, for the frail fellow-mortal whom the more gentle villain had left or hurried to destruction !

With great difficulty, holding his burden at arm's length, he raised himself, and pro-

ceeded to disengage from her throat handkerchief and shawl, in order to bind her securely.

At this critical juncture, she recovered from the stunning stupor of her descent. Her eyes and understanding opened slowly to her horrible position and its probable result. Faintly she again closed them, and sunk on her companion's brawny breast, who afterwards declared he was not half so taken aback when the *sharks* had driven him down the abyss of Black Gang.

"I gives her a rattlin'," he commented, "and with a shiver she *sheers-to*: surely she was built for a cruising life! I never seed a fore-and-aft schooner ride more snugger in a heavy sea. She *was* out-and-out."

Caroline indeed possessed ready presence of mind. As anxious for preservation now as of death ten minutes before, she assisted Lyell to fasten the Cachemere beneath her arms, and then to brace her to his back, while she tied the long hair that was now hanging torn and dishevelled about her shoulders under

her neck, lest it should interfere with the smuggler's sight.

"Now, God forgive me my sins for the sake of the life I would save!" was the man's awful *thought*, but he spoke not. In another moment he had cleared the distance, but with a rebound that would have been fatal had not Caroline caught a life-hold of a fibrous plant that had struggled through a rocky fissure.

With a frame still vibrating from his gymnastic exploit, her partner in peril made haste to unloose her, and they sat down on the broader parapet they had thus reached. He then asked her if she could climb, explaining to her that she must either follow him or remain where she was till he returned with ropes and other aid.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, hastily. "No, do not leave me."

"Then we must abide a while here," was the laconic reply of the giant.

Wet to the skin, exposed to the lurid sky, to the raging blast, and emotion so violent and exhausting, she did not yield to appre-

hension, but after a pause observed that she was more ready *now* than she might be an hour hence to be guided by him.

“I’ll tell you what it is, marm,” he said, “it’s no use trying with all that sail set. I must shorten a bit, and then mayhap you’d let me heave you up there (pointing to the green summit.) Better a damaged figure-head than a capsize. I’ll get you in snug, never fear, if so be as you steers according to my notion of things.”

Caroline measured the distance with her eyes as well as she could; and, after some little demur, consented to be swung over the down. The fall again stunned her, but Jacob took some water from a cleft, and partly restored her; then he bore her down the precipitous path, descending through an almost impenetrable thicket of brushwood and bramble.

Separating some portion of this, he crept on hands and knees, dragging her with him as carefully as he could, till they reached a well-concealed grating and door of iron, which

let them, by means of his pass-key, down a long flight of rough-hewn steps; and, after some turnings, deposited her at length in a spacious cavern, whose far end was enveloped in darkness, but in which there was sufficient light to exhibit kegs and barrels and other suspicious store in great quantity, now replaced by the bathing equipage belonging to the hotel at Freshwater. Here he helped himself to what he called a thimbleful of Schiedam, and poured some down her throat, without stinting the quantity.

At another time, lover of Nature as she was, she would have seen that the roof of this spacious wave-built cavern was hung with sparkling stalactites, its sides ribbed into innumerable columns; that from the narrow aperture she commanded a magnificent view of the western ocean, which now, in the spring-tide, boomed and fretted against its walls; she would have observed the singular, isolated rocks standing out in bold relief in the foreground, like monster tritons or shapes of the pagan sea-nymphs of old, ere the

Wight took kindly to its Christianity a century later than the sister isle; or like marine temples of worship, or castles of the cormorant and penguin, or—any thing else you like.

All this, and the smuggler's collection of luxuries, duty free, were as much lost to her as though she had really descended to Hades; so the latter assured me he carried her as he would have done a child, through by-places and nooks like shot-holes, into his little public, that looked so innocent and primitive in its simplicity, nestled in the small hollow which seemed purposely made for its reception, the while it concealed a vast *depôt* of fraud.

Overcome by fatigue, or perchance by the dram she had taken, her sleep that night was unbroken by those mutilated pictures of recent events impressed on the chambers of the brain like stenographic copies which so usually interrupt repose after agitation. The rising sun, turning the waves of the Atlantic into light, aroused her from slumber soft and dreamless as that of healthy infancy. The

uneasy-looking woman was at hand to offer garments, dry indeed, but draggled and discoloured by the rain and brine. Little, however, cared she for comfort ; the hour had arrived when stern resolve made the whole motive of existence : she lived no longer for things of this world.

It was hard upon midnight when the household at Alum Bay was startled by the ringing of the door-bell. The absence of their lady had, of course, given rise to the most disastrous conclusions ; and with the speechlessness of intense anxiety they attended the summons, and admitted the visitor of such untimely season.

A figure enveloped in a travelling-cloak, from which the water ran in streams, entered, and revealed to the astonished lackeys an accustomed guest of the hotel of the *Place Vendôme*. He staggered across the hall as they led him to an apartment in which were lights and a fire, and sank into a seat that they placed for him in front of the hearth. The

weakness, however, soon yielded to the refreshments that were promptly supplied, and in a few minutes after his arrival the purpose of his coming was related, and the fears of the attendants removed.

“ I was at the gate,” he said, “ when your lady was passing through it for her evening walk, and she accompanied me towards Yarmouth, whilst I delivered to her certain important instructions of which I was the bearer. In the earnestness of our conversation, we had approached nearer the village than we were aware, when a tempest of wind and rain set in, that made the first available shelter the most advisable. The inclemency of the night decided your mistress to remain where she was till the morning ; but, as I must return instantly to London with certain documents which are in this house, I have made my way here as best I could, and shall leave again at daybreak. As I have a mass of papers to examine, I shall not go to bed. Let me have a cheerful fire in the library—and wine, d’ye

hear? a pile of blazing wood, and plenty of wine—my heart is chilled within me.”

Milor Ridsdale, the *ami de la maison* of the deceased banker, was too well known to the establishment of his secluded widow, either personally or by report, to find any difficulty in having his wishes complied with. Circumstances, too, seconded the story he told, and gave force to its relation. The storm howled fearfully abroad; the speaker's manners were solemn and impressive; and above all, imperious sleep laid its embargo on the valets' eyes and senses. What was it to a fashionable *batterie de ménage* whether there might be a possibility that the chief was not so conveniently cared for as ordinarily? The clock had told twelve, and does any reasonable being expect a servant's duty to extend beyond midnight?

I said that the speaker's manner was solemn and impressive; his look, if it seemed not to his hearers of that character, struck ice into his own veins as its expression caught his

eye, reflected in one of the mirrors of the chamber to which he had removed. It was the library—in which he was told Caroline passed the greatest portion of her time: Caroline, *whom he had murdered!*——

With the brisk alacrity of Frenchmen, the attendants had heaped the ample hearth with flaming faggots, and covered a round table, placed in a nook beside it, with store of goodly flasks. Having learnt the visitor's pleasure as to the morrow, they closed the door, and left him to himself.

Haply when that great mystery—that miracle, past the heart of man to conceive—"the illimitable, silent, never-resting thing called Time, rolling, rushing on, swift, silent, like an all-embracing ocean tide, on which we and all the universe swim like exhalations"—haply, I say, when the foundations of Time shall be revealed to us, so also shall be the fountains of its sister wonder, Thought. As yet, lived there sage who might say—whence it came, or whither departed?

Lo! it is with that pale and trembling

man, who, with a burning draught, doth drain goblet after goblet of strong wine, as if it was the mountain rill. As he paces with a wild and doubtful step the narrow limits of the chamber, why is it that he pauses not, save to feed the hearth already so fiercely raging—or the goblet that ministers to his fiery thirst?

He stays not to look into the parchments strewn over the floor, torn from those massive coffers that even his desperate strength had all but failed to force. Money, too, lies scattered around—gold, and jewels, and notes, whose value causes his head and senses to reel. Still, hour after hour, he plies his bootless toil—more wildly, as the wine doth its office with his brain; hour after hour have worn away, and now to the lurid light of the chamber is added the crimson streak of dawn, struggling through the mist which clothes hill and valley. The solitary has thrown open the lattice doors that lead to the seaward lawn, perchance seeking in the dewy fragrance of early day an elixir which might dispel the heaviness that endureth for the night.

Fresh comes the pleasant air of morning from the bright chambers of the east, as yet hidden by the curtains of silvery vapour wherewith Tithonus surrounds the couch of his bride! The cool breeze bathes his burning forehead; with the clouds of night the darkness of his spirit passes away. The visions which brought such terror to his soul—they were but the baseless fabrics of fancy. He shakes off melancholy thoughts, like a giant refreshed; his heart once more beats freely. “Joy cometh with the morning.”

He had thrown open the lattice-doors which led to the lawn, that sloped down to the shores of the small bay. On either side this lawn was girt by downs, that rolled backwards from it to the south and to the west. As he gazed unconsciously along it, the mists, which lay in masses on the hills, were drawn up slowly from the valley; at first uncovering the turf whereon they had rested, and anon exposing the small objects above the surface.

Slowly the mysterious pall of nature was

removed—what hath it revealed to the solitary watcher, that freezes his blood and turns his thews and sinews to stone? Hath the greedy grave of ocean surrendered its prey? do the dead walk again, “with fifty mortal murders on their heads?” A form approaches; silent as the vapours that make its drapery, it glides towards him: the strong man shouts in the agony of his terror. The shape is within his reach. See! he dashes towards it—he grasps the air! He has fallen stark and stiff at its feet!

CHAPTER VI.

“ COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.”

Resources of our rural enonomists—Fathers and sons—
Anecdote of the Duke of ——Letters in lang syne—Home
and homely things—Ponderings prospective—Cheltenham,
its past and present state—A bachelor's *ménage*—The rosy
goddess—Anecdote of Lord ——.

“ Come hither, Camarado Jaques: hast thou noted that the pig seeth the wind afar off? Thou hast: it is good. Pr’ythee, hast thou marked how the gudgeon foretelleth the thunder? Ay; excellent well! The storm cometh, but the cormorant is already housed. The observance of signs and tokens is allotted to the lower animals—philosophy calleth it instinct. To man, placed over all, reason hath been more niggardly supplied: therefore, note thou the service of scholastic humanities.”—*Old Play*.

“ Ma foi! sur l’avenir bien fou qui se fierà ;
Tel qui rit vendredi, dimanche pleurera.”

RACINE—*Les Plaideurs*.

CHAPTER VI.

The opinion entertained by Byron of the forlorn state of the higher classes in the rural districts is shewn in the provision which he makes for undergoing the usual period of fashionable ostracism about to be suffered by a party of the *haut ton* at the country-seat of Lord Henry Armundeville.

Many well-meaning people treat as a conventional fallacy the idea that the broad domains of England are indebted, for the honour of being on visiting terms with their lords, to their instinct for woodcraft and necessity of field sports, attributing the rural homes of our pleasant land, and the boon spirit of their hospitality, to the provident character of our

political economy, social virtue, and such like astute and amiable impulses.

Patriotism is no doubt a most respectable property, but not quite of such high *caste* as charity, whose device of quality has two supporters. Patriotism, if not absolutely an adjective, very rarely stands alone. Your soldier doth not banish from memory the marshal's baton ; he who devoteth himself to his country through mother church, thinks that a mitre is as becoming as an ordinary beaver ; and may not the thick and thin patriot, who abandons a Neapolitan carnival for a hunt ball—the precious porcelain of Parisian society for the clods neighbouring his sylvan sanctuary—mingle with love of his country fond thoughts of

“ The turf, the chase, the pheasants' golden wings,
And London “ larks,” when Philomela sings ?”

Having parted with my companion, as related in the fourth chapter of this volume, after bestowing upon him such consanguinical attentions as become a nephew towards an uncle

whose real and personal estates he was presumptive heir to, I repaired to town for the purpose of those refreshments of commissariat and exchequer which young gentlemen are in the habit of seeking in the metropolis.

How true has been the running in the race of improvement during the last twenty years! When I was a boy, the intercourse between a father and son was such as the former might be supposed to have carried on with an angel. A gentleman commoner at Christchurch, whose "governor" allowed him £300 a-year, kept a stud for which such a stipend would not pay the turnpikes—a proceeding treated "at home" as if university bills were discharged by the special interposition of Providence. A more honest or honourable-hearted man than he whom it was my fortune to call sire, never filled the office of justice of the peace, or a bumper to "church of state." He was a shrewd economist withal—canvassed every item of his steward's bills, and knew to a pint how much buttermilk was sold, and how much set aside for the pigs; yet he saw his only

child spending more in a month than he had of annual income, without betraying any anxiety on the subject.

That it was being done with impunity, he had not a pretext for appearing to believe; for one fine morning, as he was sauntering with me on the lawn, where I was waiting for my cover-hack to be brought round, a person approached, who, after whispering some cabalistic words in my ear, intimated to him that his son was arrested for £96. Without any observation, he took him into the house, and, after remaining there a few minutes, returned, accompanied by the stranger, who took his leave with a bow. He then joined me again, without allusion to what had occurred; and from that hour to the day of his death he never hinted at it. He might have supposed my resources came from my uncle, but he never made an attempt to assure himself of it. It was not the fashion of his time for the old squire to intermeddle with the young squire's expenses.

How unlike the wisdom of a certain modern

father—a nobleman of whom it may be truly said, that his habits do honour to his station, his heart to his country and his kind! His rank is the highest to which an English subject can attain, and his fortune suited to his condition. He has a large family; the eldest, his son and heir, being attached to one of the regiments of Horse Guards. Rumours having reached him that the young soldier had fallen into the hands of the Israelites, he sent for him, and spake to the following intent:—
“ M—, I hear you are borrowing money at twenty per cent. I have your brothers’ and sisters’ fortunes to invest, which I should be glad to put out at a fourth of that interest; you can have the whole at five per cent., and be at no expense in shewing the security you propose, as I am satisfied as to your title to the estates on which the loan would be charged.”

I recommend this style of doing business to all whom it may concern: it is “short, sharp, and decisive”—the way in which man’s warfare should ever be carried on, whether with the *species* or the *specie*.

A week in London having enabled me to obtain, by means of my own reiterated promises to pay, a slight undertaking to the same effect of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, I once more turned towards home and its *penates*—more especially the fauns and dryads.

Before Mr. Rowland Hill established his commonwealth of *letters*, the correspondence of a country-house was regulated by Act of Parliament. If the host was a legislator, then his guests regularly took to pen and ink on the occasion of their visits to him; if not, neither he nor any of his household dreamt of perpetrating manuscript, unless a member was available to procure for it the privilege of free *entrée* and exit at the post-office. Because this was the custom of the time, my father, with as much paternity about him as would go to a baker's dozen of modern sires, wrote to me perhaps once in three months; and when he did write, his epistles were such as a man was likely to indite who had a score on the stocks at the same time.

The “Wonder”—in those days the especial

coach of the Salopians—made the journey from the Bull and Mouth to the Lion at Shrewsbury in sixteen hours and a half, to the fraction of a minute; and as it started at 6 a. m., reached its destination at half-past 10 p. m. As I had not advertised them at home of my proposed descent, there was a post-chaise to order, and three miles to execute before my destination was over; and it was hard upon midnight when, with cold fingers and the gastric of a wolf, I “summoned the portal,” as they used to call ringing the door-bell.

The mansion was “buried in sleep,” as the genteel phrase for the fires and lights being out was wont to run; but, after a second application to the bell-handle, of a more emphatic character than the first, the bolts were drawn, and the heavy door slowly moved inwards. The warder was enacted by the old butler, to whom the reader has been already introduced, with a lamp in his hand, and a predominance of beer in his appearance. While the postboy was depositing my *impedimenta* in the hall,

my demand for refreshments was made with such a hearty intimation of the intention to be immediately supplied, that the buttery was presently sacked, and its contents laid in the small drawing-room, where the hearth, which still burnt cheerfully, offered its grateful accompaniment to good cheer.

On the following morning I met my father in the breakfast-room, which was the first intimation he had of my arrival. To one who knew him, or had studied human nature, less, the feeling that struggled through his efforts to disguise the emotion he underwent at the moment would have seemed the working of strong natural affection. To me it told another tale ; his character—to those who looked deeper than the surface—revealed far more of sternness and indifference than of tenderness—weakness it had none. In depth and comprehensiveness it was suited for the philosopher or the sage, but early habits of indulgence and ease had turned its energy aside ; and that which circumstances might have fostered into public virtue, they had nurtured into some-

thing very nearly akin to private vice—not indeed the active offence of evil, but the passive indifference to good.

That such a condition should have arisen out of a hale constitution and a handsome estate, to one surrounded with comforts and troops of friends, may seem a paradox to the many; he who, having relinquished the gay world in which he has fluttered away the summer of life, finds himself the tenant of his ancestral home, with all his household gods broken about his ears, will have no difficulty in understanding how it might come to pass. My mother's temporary absences had now grown into a constant residence at some place of fashionable resort. His home was a home no more; and he, whom Providence had shaped for better things, was already quite an ascetic and half a misanthrope.

Our meeting, though a cordial one, was curtailed of its natural proportions. If, however, the instinctive love of a father for a son had cooled (so far as outward sign or token went) down to a most courtly philoprogenitiveness,

there could be no doubt that my happiness—that is to say, my position—was the subject nearest his heart. A few months had wrought a great change in his habits ; his scrupulous neatness of person was evidently fast departing, and, instead of the usual appliances of a country gentleman's breakfast-table, he flavoured his tea and dried toast with an ode of Horace. I had paid my respects to a game pie on the side table, and entered on the discussion of its *materiel*, when he took up the matter which evidently occupied him solely.

“ We are dull here, Hyde : bad rumours, too, about the hunting. Sir Bellingham Graham is the new master, and they say the farmers won't fancy him, eh ? ”

“ He is a good sportsman, sir, and that will tell in time : a little energetic, to be sure ; but it's something to be in earnest, even though the manner of our zeal be rude.”

“ Shall you spend the winter at home, or any part of it ? Your mother's at Brighton, I believe — somebody told me so, I think. Longueville is at Cheltenham. He wrote me

a letter the other day, stuffed with couplets from Suckling and Shenstone: shouldn't be surprised to hear he had gone mad—the paper smelt most damnably of musk.”

“I heard from him before I left town, and gathered from his autobiography that he was occupied with pleasant people. Cheltenham is the pet colony of the idle and rollicking Irish, whose jokes are a more effectual cure for melancholy than its waters for the grosser humours. But Uncle Tom is not yet tired of life, and I have no idea of his committing suicide—or an Irish widow.”

“That may be, but I have my suspicions—perhaps my premises. Will you accept a suggestion from me? I put no restraint on your inclination. Do what shooting you stand in need of. Your horses, too, would be the better of the master's eye, as also the eccentric dwarf that attends to them—or rather, is supposed to do so. Then run up to Gloucestershire; your uncle won't be the worse of a little looking after.”

My father was not one who wasted words,

and my resolution outran his hint. Pride forbade me to say how ill at ease his intimation had made me, but the determination I expressed after dinner to put his proposal into effect on the following morning must have betrayed it.

The few hours which intervened between our conversation of the morning and the announcement that I adopted his views, I had passed in no agreeable contemplations. In my rambles over the grounds, a too sure indication appeared of ruinous neglect ; and in the farmstead and stables neither care nor economy existed. Slight attention as I had bestowed on my father's resources, it was manifest from the report of the steward, as well as the state of such portions of the property as I had time to visit, that they were fast becoming dilapidated.

How vital then was the question of my uncle's inheritance ! I was without a profession—without even a disposition to turn to any occupation, involving the necessity of toil or perseverance in it, within my reach. Yet

did a quick and eager energy fill me, while this conviction was making its appeal. How is it that doubt or despondence ever makes captive the human heart? We are the sculptors of our own fortunes; and if, haply, our task be difficult and severe, is not the shape carved from marble more graceful and enduring than that which is moulded out of more pliable and plastic matter?

During the evening, I gleaned enough to satisfy me I had arrived at no false conclusion as to the state of affairs. My father had evidently taken leave of all active interference in them. He was in the hands of his servants—with such results, present and perspective, as attend those who suffer themselves to be so represented. The moral aspect, indeed, was as little promising as the material; and I parted with him, intimating an intention to return after a short sojourn with my uncle, for the first time touched with the rod which teaches the waters of life to flow—the wand of the enchanter—Resolution!

I am told Cheltenham is growing genteel;

if so, it is losing fifty per cent. of its efficacy in the cases for which it was formerly administered. Many a patient, who might have swallowed the Montpelier Spa, without his liver being the wiser, has had every globule of bile pumped out of his body by the course of jokes daily exhibited in former times in the High Street. The cunning men who achieved these cures were a set of Irish *habitués* of the place, a few of whom were reputable, a great many disreputable, and all "devil-may care."

These happy rogues, who went through the world as prescribed in the recipe which recommends "a light heart and a pair of thin pantaloons," might be seen in the vicinity of the "Plough," every afternoon, weather permitting, surrounded by groups in every phase of laughter. Evening found them similarly attended and occupied at the table of some unfortunate, born to a good estate and his own aversion, or one who had made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Plutus in the East, and returned with his bags filled with gold and his bladder with gall.

Is gentility the besetting absurdity of the day? A good modern comedy, we are told, is not to be expected, because all mankind are as like as eggs; and a "character" is as little to be looked for as a miracle. I never knew but two—one a waiter at "a free-and-easy" in the city, and the other Chief Justice of the ———, in Ireland. The waiter had a slight impediment in his speech that was vastly in his favour. For example, the way in which he would ask, "What noble gentleman ordered the wa-a-bit?" (cockney for toasted cheese) or "The distinguished indewidual for the twype (tripe)?" was perfection. The judge was as broad in his own way, as we shall presently see.

I found my uncle occupying a villa close to the Imperial, so situated that the whole population of the town worth seeing either walked, drove, or rode past it in the course of the day. Although it was only a little month since we parted at Leicester, he was no longer the same man. More kind or hospitable he could not be; indeed, the front of his offending was that

he was too courteous. It was within a few minutes of his dinner-hour when I arrived ; and, in lieu of grumbling, as was his custom when there was even a prospect of that meal being kept back for a minute, he bade me not hurry my toilette, but the rather to give care and time to it, "as he was to have a small assembly in the evening."

At first I fancied he was bantering, but it was no joke ; neither was the fashion of his personal appointment, for he was got up with a fastidiousness of costume quite superlative, and a reduction of redundancy altogether marvellous. In those days, the patent Adonisian girdle had not been discovered, whereby the epigastrium is now taught to retreat upon the vertebræ, the stomach being then generally subjected to no greater restraint than the gentle limits of waistcoat or waistband. It was not my business to ask the old beau what he had done with his corporation ; but I confess it puzzled me to imagine what he would do with his dinner.

As I went towards my room, I passed the

lower suite of apartments. In one of these was a table laid out with uncle Tom's usual regard to the *savoir faire*; while two others, which comprised the whole, were waving with roses and myrtles, like the groves of Paphos. Instead of my nose giving notice that I was the guest of a disciple of Mundungus, for anything the surrounding odours announced, I might have arrived on a visit to the "sweet South," at its country-seat in a bed of violets. What the plague and pestilence could all this portend?

"Give me my dressing things, you booby!" said I to Maher, who accompanied me as valet, for the purpose of interrupting the attentions he was paying to the strong beer at the hall. "My slippers! where the devil's the hot water? is there no housemaid to be found?"

"I'm going for it myself, sir. Sure I couldn't ask the young lady —!"

"You eternal ass! what do you mean by the young lady?"

"The beautiful young creature that was in this room when I brought up your honour's

luggage—in a silk gownd, silk stockings, satin shoes, a lace cap, and smelling like a nosegay. So she was, by J——! I mane, that's the fact."

* * * * *

I never descended to a meal after a long journey with less appetite. The bell ceased ringing as I stalked down stairs, and my uncle and his guest were already seated when I entered the dinner room. The stranger was such as his entertainer ought to have been—a little protuberant man, with a red face and a white poll—his eyes sharp and mischievous as a lynx's. He shot a furtive glance at me as I took my chair, and continued the conversation which he had been carrying on with great energy—

“Four days ago, left Dublin and a sensation behind me. The matter was this: We had to hang a fellow at Naas. (Another morsel of calipee.) Circumstantial evidence slight, but good. Sheriff—very scrupulous person—looked grave about it; good Protestant though, and therefore his doubts were to

be cared for. Asked the accused if he had anything to say why the law should not take its course? Replied he was innocent. To reconcile all parties, I thus proceeded to pass sentence. 'Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty, by a jury of your countrymen, of a crime which subjects you to the penalty of death. You say you are innocent of the charge: the truth of that assertion is known only to yourself and your Maker. It is my duty to leave you for execution. If guilty, you know that you richly deserve the fate which awaits you; if innocent, it will be a great gratification to feel that you are hanged without such a crime upon your conscience. In either case, you will be delivered from a world of care.' "

This is a fact. Who shall say my Lord Chief Justice was not a character in his way?

. CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST BEREAVEMENT.

Life under the Cotswold Hills—As it was—Costumes of '24 and '44—An Irish Ninon de l'Enclos—Wit, or at least wickedness — Fanny H—— —The expected guest — The unexpected news — A return — A departure for the bourn from which there is no return — The hero's exchequer — Doubts — Difficulties — His heritage the heritage of how many !

“ What bitter tears bedim the eye !—
What deaths we suffer ere we die !”

LOGAN.

“ Death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come——”

Julius Cæsar.

“ The queen, my lord, is dead.”—
“ She should have died hereafter.”

Macbeth.

CHAPTER VII.

The page which is the storehouse of fact has slight kindred with the hot-pressed darling of fancy—the bazaar of dainty conceits, wherein each agent of life is “a perfect monster that the world ne’er saw.” Modern works of imagination, indeed, do not abound with the high-flown affectations of the fashionable novels of the last century; partly because our tastes are less artificial than were those of the days of farthingales, powder, ruffles, and bag-wigs; and partly because Scott and the writers of his school gave the *coup de grace* to fustian when they brought nature into fashion.

It was well said by Gray, that any man living might write a book, if he would but set down truly what he had seen or heard. A

volume of the kind would furnish far more effective, because more natural, instruction to such as rightly read, than one whose materials were obviously selected and put together that they might point a moral. Every book should be written for the reader's information ; but the less it proclaims its purpose, the more certain its success. An author should set about his calling as the lover of woodcraft follows his sport : there should be no sneaking behind hedges for a point-blank shot at puss upon her form, or the covey at feed ; but fair stand-up shooting at folly or pheasant " as it flies."

I take it, the perfection of a work of imagination is, not that he who reads should be able to point out where its moral is, but that he should be unable to show where it is *not*. Life is the library of nature. This he who is yet in the novitiate of the world knows better than the philosopher of the closet. I was an early student of that encyclopædia of truth, and ever turned to it as one knowing the value of the lore. Rarely has a passage failed to sup-

ply matter of interest and instruction; nor shall it have taught in vain, if its moral be with the musings unfolded in my page.

A copy, profusely embellished and expensively got up, courted perusal, in the drawing-room to which we adjourned, after an unusually brief symposium. Uncle Tom had abandoned port for claret, resigned tobacco in favour of otto of roses — ominous degeneracy!

The party numbered about a couple of dozen, chiefly ladies; with here and there a cavalier, considerably beyond his climacteric. The softer section of the society was also running tough, a round thirty being probably the minimum any member of it could claim. The majority were pretty nearly as naked as negresses—a horrible frenzy for going bare raging some twenty-five years ago, when the efforts to cut down women's garments at the shoulders were only exceeded by those made to cut them up at the knees.

The eye is the most finished of all courtiers: whence it comes to pass that nothing intro-

duced with the *prestige* of fashion frights our proprieties. There was, therefore, no awkwardness or restraint in the manner in which we mingled among this bevy of beauties (to give uncle Tom his due, it *was* a good-looking lot), little encumbered as they were with drapery. Monstrous as it may seem, I have no doubt, were a woman to venture at noon-day into one of the leading thoroughfares of London, dressed as every *élégante* was in 1817, she would be taken into custody.

Is there any so *vert vert*, into whose hand this chapter shall fall, as to believe that youth is the season of love-making? If so, having the authority of its inditer in respect, he will understand that the strength and emphasis of sweethearting is precisely in the ratio of the experience of the performers. Your novice whispers his vows—your adept sings them out as if he was heaving the deep sea-line instead of a sigh. So much for the dialogue ; as for the action, it may be more conveniently left to the reader's imagination, in the hope it is a tolerably lively one, if he desire to

arrive within any reasonable distance of the reality.

No one but myself could have found cause of discontent with the assembly. If the company did not seem beyond a commonplace average, there was nothing to object against it. The women were well undressed, and the majority were Irish—full of fun, and, all being out of their teens, full of flirting. The *ménage* of the old bachelor was capital.

Unexceptionable coffee and *chasse* were served, in a fashion beseeeming the quiet cultivator of the *savoir-vivre*—not jerked about by spruce ruffians in motley, but soberly held to woo your acceptance by sleek serving-men in suits of complete black, reverential faces, and periwigs that outpowdered the Jungfrau. His rooms were furnished with great taste and elegance, and the lights and flowers. —“Who the devil ordered these lights and flowers?” I asked myself—I think aloud, as people always do on the stage, and as many besides Lord W—— and myself have done in a drawing-room—“Old consanguinity, with

the spindle-legs, has had nothing to do with their disposition ; he has neither *nous* nor nose for it."

"Have a little patience and you'll see," said a dame who was gathering blossoms from one of the flowering shrubs to which I addressed my soliloquy ; "wait a while, and you'll know all. But take care of your heart ; the laws of the lists don't recognise jousts between seventy and seventeen."

"Madam," said I, with a gallantry assumed to hide my annoyance, "could I preserve my heart from the ravishment that now sparkles before me, I were unworthy the privilege of a true knight ; already a slave, what have I to fear from captivity ? Therefore, propound—who is the other divinity of this paradise ?"

"For that pretty speech I won't deprive you of the pleasure of anticipation," replied the lady, whose tongue, like Paddy Carey's, was tipped with a bit of the brogue ; "you may reckon upon her appearance every moment, in an atmosphere of black satin and

milles-fleurs. Now, go on with your vocabulary of compliments. Do you suppose one woman can find no pleasanter occupation for herself and her *cavaliere servente* than talking about another? But first, who are you, whence come you, and what's your business?"

"Firstly, the unworthy kinsman of a most honoured gentleman, the host of this poor hospitality: — secondly, from my father's hall:—lastly, pleasure!"

"Pithy and to the purpose. Shall you make any stay amongst us?"

"*Cela depend!* If there is any faith to be put in appearances, it is probable."

"Ah! a young speculator in the billing and cooing line. Well, if you have enterprise enough, you will succeed here; observe, they drive business of that sort rather briskly in these parts."

The spouter of this liberal *libretto* was a lady, of whom I had heard during my visits to the Irish metropolis as a *belle* somewhat *passée*, but with a reputation as a light o' love, fresh and blooming as it was ere her

summers told a score. She is still in the flesh, and still haunts the alleys and temples of the Baïæ of Cotswold—the ghost indeed of her former self, but still not quite invisible—though of her countenance no more remains to be seen than the tip of her nose.

This modern instance of the axiom, “truth is stranger than fiction,” was a beauty in her youth. As she advanced in years, that invidious attack of epicenity—a copious harvest of the chin—began to manifest itself, whereupon the sufferer set up gorgets to her caps, which for a time successfully “masked” the natural *cheveaux-de-frise*. As her autumn progressed, the stubble bristled beyond all bounds, and nothing remained but to muzzle the enemy with a counterscarp. To this end, eschewing daylight, she is now only to be seen visiting the glimpses of the moon in a helmet whose visor is never up—a turban, whose folds leave no portion of the face divine visible, as has been said, but the apex of the proboscis.

You can’t lend your ear courteously to the nonsense of a nymph of two score and ten

(that is, *I* can't, not having been vouchsafed an equal grace), particularly when you have something else in your head — to say nothing of your heart. While my ancient Aphrodite was skimming the ocean of small talk, drawn by those loves and graces which form the band called *amour propre*, my spirit was sorely troubled within me; and, after watching the entrance doors till my brain reeled, I passed into the farther room, without the courage to cast a look behind.

“ Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread;
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a fearful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”

This was not attended with much improved comfort; for in the chamber I removed to was old Longueville, looking monstrously lackadaisical, and evidently anticipating an arrival as anxiously as I did myself, though obviously not with similar feelings. He was seated in an easy chair—the very *tableau* of a

sexagenarian beau, and to which the Lord Ogleby of its most finished representative might stand in such relation of comparison as the daubs of —— and —— to the best productions of Reynolds or Lawrence.

He regarded me as I approached ; and though his eye was uneasy, it wanted none of its habitual kindness. But how easy it is to detect there is something to conceal, or turn aside, where the speech avoids familiar subjects, or homely and accustomed allusions !

“Hyde,” he spake, “for a vicious youth, one sees considerable virtue in thy fashion of attire—’tis chaste, and purity is the beauty of holiness. Where dost buy thy blacking?”

“That grace is of our valet, uncle kind. All praise that visions of virtue still float around thy venerable ‘Brutus :’ ‘Hyperion curls !’ Dost bake thy wigs at home?”

“Apropos of hair, what was that Irish-woman with a beard ogling and whispering you about, nephew ? Beware of her : she’s a female Saturn, that desires to devour every male adult that comes in her way. Hyde,

what *was* the anthropophagus instilling into thine ear?"

"Something about a Circe in sables that is expected here. Lo! the portal opens—enter enchantress."

My uncle's face caught my eye as I turned it on the party that came laughing onwards, and the expression was full of varied emotion and disappointment, which I could not avoid observing, though I stayed not to analyze. The leader of this hilarious band was one likely—for the moment, at least—to be the cynosure of any circle she might enter. She was a ripe Hebe, of some seventeen summers, with golden tresses, eyes of amethyst, and cheeks like the sunny segment of the peach. Though so young, her person, which was the perfection of womanly symmetry, partook of the character of the *Venus genetrix*: its stately luxuriousness rendered more striking by the slim and rather diminutive figures of the two young men, who were her companions. One of these was her brother: the other * *

Poor Fanny H——m! seldom has so fair a

flower been transplanted from its happy fatherland, to wither so soon, and so sadly! The bright girl passed with the step of an antelope towards the seat from which my uncle arose, as she flung the boon caress of her round rich arms on the hands held out to welcome her. O Zeno, Zeno! well was it for thine immortality, that thy lot was cast in Athens, instead of the neighbourhood of the Montpelier Spa?

While this reception was in progress, a note arrived, whose contents were evidently not relished by the master of the festival. Nevertheless he bated no jot of gentle courtesy; but, bestirring himself vigorously, he set several tables in battle array—at least, those who beleaguered them upon active freebooting—and, at the same time, instigated a Mrs. O' somebody to pound music out of a piano.

Anon, to the air of “the Wind that shakes the Barley,” began, in much earnest, “change sides and down the middle—*poussette*, and right and left:” the Milesians being a people equally distinguished for physical as for moral

(or immoral) agitation. Being, by the vicissitudes of the dance, thrown into juxtaposition with the hirsute Hibernian before mentioned, I asked whether the late comer, with the violet eyes, might be the ravisher to whom she adverted.

“No,” she answered, “this divinity is, as they say, rather the Proserpina than the Cytherea of our modern mythology: the real Paphian Queen has got the spleen, or some other lady-like epidemic, and won’t descend to-night. But don’t break your heart. I suppose you remain among us till to-morrow, and consequently may be certain to encounter the etheriality within these walls, or see them razed to the foundation. ‘This widow’s the sun of our system’” — and she hummed the refrain of the ballad in the *School for Scandal*, slightly parodying the words.

“You have selected your illustration from a characteristic source,” I observed.

“So there really is something in you: miracles will never cease! Sheridan and a Shropshire squire on visiting terms! Is it

possible this precocious youth comprehends my heathen moods—the active and passive of my pagan pantheism? Oh! it's high time I should faint! *A la bonne heure!* here comes 'the Wind that shakes the Barley;' how reviving!"—so saying, she set sail "down the middle and up again"—"youth"—no, not youth—wriggles astern, and wrinkles at the prow.

After a copious exhibition of rich wines and cordials, the guests went their ways; and so did those who remained, but, as it struck me, neither the uncle nor the nephew to repose; at all events, I can answer for one of the twain. As it was probably not one of Maher's saints' days, he was in my room when I returned, disposing it for my comfort. He made some observation, to which, I suppose, I gave a practical reply, for, as he limped away, he muttered, "talk of a horse's heels! never saw a baste let out so spiteful as that—never did, by J——! never, that's a fact."

I had hardly shaken off a most uncom-

fortable vision of the night, "which was not all a dream," when a letter was put into my hands that filled me with alarm. It was from old Moran, and the news it contained of my father allowed not a moment's longer absence from his side. Having communicated its contents to my uncle, who was greatly moved at them, he ordered post-horses instantly to his carriage; and, in an hour from its receipt, I was on my way to Tewkesbury. As we parted, he gave some reason for not accompanying me, which seemed little satisfactory to himself: as for me, I neither heard nor cared to hear it, for my heart had anticipated its journey.

"The squire's abed, sir," the old butler observed, as I alighted at the door, where he had stood watching for my arrival from the moment he thought there was a probability of it. "He went to bed at his usual time, and made no mention of being out of sorts, *but his hour is come*. He does not know I sent for you, so account for your return in the best way you can when you meet—it had

better be in the breakfast-room to-morrow, as I think, sir."

It was a clear frosty morning, and I had been anxiously expecting my father for some time. The sun was out, and the crimson walls and hangings of the room in which I sat, filled it, as it were, with a warm and ruddy atmosphere, when the door opened, and he entered. My presence did not appear to strike him as extraordinary; he merely said, "Good day, my boy Hyde—how pleasantly the morning comes in!" and took his seat at the upper end of the table, a deep rosy tint encompassing the spot on which his chair stood.

Prepared as I was for some great change, my very soul died at the spectral contrast before me. Prudence, discretion, self-restraint, all yielded to it; and, in the agony of my terror, I exclaimed, "Oh, my father, what is this! what has come upon you?—*you look like a statue.*"

He turned a marble glance on me—had the celestial spark already departed? Presently

we placed him on his bed, and watched him sleep into the grave! Call it phantasy, foolishness, if you will; but I cannot the less think the spirit *had* left its tenement of clay before we met for our last greeting! When the soul has set, may not the twilight of existence still flicker around us; as, when the sun—the life of nature—disappears, its rays still linger to soothe us into night? * * *

The inheritance to which I had succeeded was in a much more embarrassed state than my worst anticipations permitted me to suppose. My father, indeed, was a strict tenant for life; but for that reason his incumbrances were more ruinous than they could have been, could he have mortgaged every acre entailed upon his son. He had borrowed money to large amounts, for what purpose there was no means of ascertaining; and, as the risk was great, because heavy insurances were to be kept up, the premiums were, of course, exorbitant. Still, however contracted, I resolved every creditor should be satisfied to the utmost farthing: my father had pledged

himself to it when living, and death is not an acquittance of honour.

He was a fond father, and a faithful of heart—the good old man for whom I wore the livery of death; but how different had it been with me if his head had turned on *what would be*, rather than his imagination on *what might*! Was his a rare delusion—an isolated beguiling? Answer me, ye who teach your children ambition for emulation; to seek gold before a good name; to look abroad for condition rather than at home for content.

My position was at this time one of infinitely greater perplexity than it would have been had I been reared to less aspiring prospects. With the many charges affecting it—in honour, if not in honesty, and my mother's fortune to boot—the estate of B—— was literally a barren heritage, to say nothing of the charges that would arise out of keeping the “old house at home” over my head. The twelve hundred pounds a-year which nominally accrued from it might be

taken at £800 realized *de facto*. Of this my mother took the half at one swoop; while the mere interest of my father's debts would swallow £300 more. Thus was I to support the character of a country gentleman with a flourishing fortune at his back, a dozen servants, a stable of horses, a kennel of dogs, a domain employing another dozen of labourers, and to give a couple of dinners a week to my neighbours, besides having two of the six spare rooms always occupied by friends—out of a net income of *one hundred per annum*.

This is no extreme case: it has its parallels in every county in England at this hour. What but this state of position upon pressure could have fostered the growth, in this christian land, of a society of moral Thugs—those unclean beasts of civilization, the jackals of the law?

CHAPTER VIII.

LE PREMIER PAS.

“To be *sold* by auction”—Canine characteristics the same now as in the days of Ulysses—An odd letter, even the writer considered—The democracy of railroads—Visit to a manorial hall—The steward—The stables—*Tails* of an eccentric—More moonlight music, love, and flowers—With a little mystery, by way of *chasse*.

“Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain.”

Ode to Eton College.

“The sea, that emblem of uncertainty,
Changed not so fast for many and many an age
As this small spot.”

ROGERS.

“A murd’rōus guilt shows not itself more soon
Than love that would seem hid: ‘love’s night is noon.’”

CHAPTER VIII.

Moses Primrose, on his return from his first passage in horse-dealing at the fair, tells his father that the style of reception his merchandize met with when he exposed it for sale made him despair of finding any one who would accept it as a gift. There may be a worse way to get rid of one's chattles than making a present of them. I remember somewhere reading the fiscal phases through which an English potato passes on the way to its final destination. It is raised in taxed ground, dug with a taxed spade, put into a taxed sack, conveyed in a taxed cart along a taxed road, and sold to a taxed shop-keeper, who retails it with five hundred per cent. of mortal imposts on its pabulum.

The man who disposes of his goods at the hammer is pretty much in the same category, besides being required to pay a swinging compliment to boot. He offers them for sale in a taxed house (to say nothing about the rent), through a taxed advertisement, by means of a taxed (licensed) auctioneer, who charges his tax in the shape of a five per centage; and there is another five per cent. tax to the Queen as a *bonus* for being allowed to incur the other taxes, to which, if your “roup,” as the Scotch call it, comes off in the country, may be added victuals and drink, *ad libitum*, to all who may have nothing better to do than attend it.

All this, and more, was made familiar to me, in consequence of the steps I found it necessary to adopt at B—— upon the sad occasion related in the last chapter.

Having come to the resolution of letting the house furnished, with a portion of the domain attached for a few years, I gave directions that the stock, farm produce, and materials, should be disposed of by the ordinary

process. At rural auctions, the custom is for all the neighbours to muster some hours before business commences; and each, having then ascertained what the other wants, with the perfection of good breeding, nobody bids against any body—whence the result may be easily understood. I saw most philosophically my corn and cattle simpered away to squire this and farmer that, at whatever price they might think fit to begin (and end) with; but when a three-year-old thorough-bred colt, that stood me in a hundred pounds before it was born, was knocked down to the lord of the manor for fifteen, I was obliged to decamp, for fear the purchaser should fare the same as the colt.

This was my first overt experience of life—shrewd household life—that social condition whose currency is a mixed circulation of coin and cunning; and, like Ferdinand Count Fathom, “I became fully convinced that the sons of men prey upon each other.”

No one, who has not stood to see his household gods unshrined around him, knows the

bitterness that waits upon the breaking-up of an old establishment—the tearing up by the roots a whole heart's harvest of indigenous manners, customs, and affections. My trial at B—— was the first but not the least severe it has pleased Providence I should undergo. There was strength enough in my nature to hold up against the partings with old servants, retainers, and dependants, whose relation, like that of the ivy to the oak, had bound them haply more closely to my fortunes; but when, for the last time, I wandered where the sunny hours of childhood were passed — the golden hopes of boyhood born and fostered — the feeble and irresolute step with which I sought those spirit-consecrated scenes while yet the worship was worthy, told too truly the feelings of the loiterer.

In such melancholy occupation, I whiled away the time devoted to the dispersion of my moveables. From some remote nook of the grounds, unobserved, I noted load after load depart, with the sternness of a stoic. It

was the evening of the last of these ungracious days, and in sad retrospection I was pacing a retired walk at a distance from the main avenue, when I perceived some one passing down it, leading a brace of spaniels. As they drew nearer, I could discern that they were two of my old and especial favourites — shadows of my path in many a greenwood ramble. At the same instant, the animals described their master, and, darting towards me with desperate force, they fairly ran away with the keeper who had them in his custody.

He was an old man, and through brake and brier they tore him, as the Tartar horse did Mazeppa ; now he stumbled, and parted company with his hat — anon, prostrate, his wig deserted him ; still they bore him remorselessly onwards. Bald-headed and begrimed, bruised and breathless, they deposited him at my feet—a while crouched before me, and then, wild with rapture, beat me almost to the earth with their caresses. At first I shouted aloud with uncontrollable laughter at

the absurdity of the spectacle ; and then, as memory called back the machinery which moved it, and the moral it told, I turned aside and groaned in the labour of my thoughts.

I set down small incidents such as these, because they are the clues by which that intricate moral labyrinth, the economy of human life, may best be unravelled. They are the lights as well as the shadows on the path of our pilgrimage, for neither the world of philosophy nor of physics is always in eclipse. Peradventure, mine may not have enjoyed as much sunshine as commonly cheers the summer of existence — but he is a sorry artist who exhibits his work in a bad point of sight. For this reason we will summarily extricate us from B—— and its shadows, standing not on the order of our going, but accomplishing it by means of the most potent agent of locomotion yet discovered, the *sic volo sic jubeo* of an author.

Six weeks had passed in gloomy occupations and scarce less sombre reflections, when at length the hour of emancipation came, and

my final arrangements were completed. In spite of every ingenuity of artifice, sharp practice, and many excellent imitations of robbery, a considerable sum was realized by the sale; and with this, reduced to a monetary essence, in form of a letter of credit on Jones and Lloyd, I prepared to leave B—— for a lengthened absence, having given my agent instructions to let it for a term, should a desirable tenant be found.

During the whole period of my abode there, notwithstanding I had written him an account of the death of my father, and sought his concurrence with the step I had adopted, there came no communication from my uncle till the morning of my departure, and then the fashion of his letter gave me as much amazement as his silence had caused anxiety. It ran in this wise:—

Montpelier Parade, Dec. 23rd, 1823.

MY DEAR HYDE,

Because my brother is quietly inurned in the family vault, his son is not required to do suttee like a Brahmin's wife. Therefore, if you have not already ordered your coffin, come here and eat the feast of Yule;

Christmas fare is bilious, and the Cheltenham waters are good alteratives. Furthermore, you can do me a service by the way. Turn out of the road at Ivetsey, and run down to Claxton ; I have only been there for five minutes since Lyster died in earnest. You need not enter the house unless you like it ; I have never been inside the doors yet—but I want your opinion of the stock—not the sheep, or steers, or live meat of any species (though there is, indeed, a Patagonian goat, in whose welfare I take an interest), but the horses. When I was there the stable was full of—but I won't anticipate. No, Lyster was an excellent creature ; it was his misfortune to have been brought up among camels and elephants ; the barbarity of his equestrian taste was not his fault. I shall expect you the day after to-morrow.

UNCLE TOM.

The carriage was at the door when this extraordinary epistle arrived—my intention being to proceed direct to London. The line, however, was pretty much the same as far as Birmingham : I made no mention, therefore, to my servants of any alteration of place, and in a few minutes the old lime-tree avenue of B —— was passed, and “the world was all before me.” Lord of that much coveted inheritance—Self, with youth, health, and the

promise of ample wealth, why was it my heart sunk within me, and my spirit was so sorely troubled?

Is there a quality in human nature, of whose existence we have ever recurring instances, and whose subtle source and agency are alike unknown? Is there in man a moral sublimation of that physical impulse, in brutes called instinct? Are types of coming events set before our imaginations by sympathy or presentiment, or some occult property whose influence is as obscure as its origin? I fancy few disciples of the world are sceptical as to the existence of this great mystery. For myself I have never doubted it.

Science is a desperate, downright democrat; a leveller both of difficulties and distinction: for instance, your railroad. When last I made the descent to Windsor by the Great Western, the companions who shared with me the flying *boudoir*, which on that line represents a carriage, were a lord in waiting on her Majesty, returning to his duty at

court, and two Irish pig-jobbers, returning from their duties at Smithfield.

Twenty years ago things were better ordered—at least their classification was better preserved so far as regarded the *genus*, one of whose peculiarities was a prepossession for four posters. To be sure, the cultivation was expensive; but what of that? Charges, costs, and disbursements, are causes whose effects have nothing to do with circumstances, in any meaning of the expression. Can it make any difference to a man who never has half the money he wants (and who *has*?) what may sweep away his visionary dust?

Let this console the good-natured reader, that it was in the rear of Taylor, of the Heygate's, best team (four thorough-bred ones, and a pair of boys trying to find out something faster than a gallop), I again opened uncle Tom's letter, to examine if it could possibly be attributed to a person in his senses.

The more I read, the more marvellous

seemed its coarseness and vile levity. To outrage a son with scurvy jokes upon his father's death!—to jumble the memory of his brother with recollections of an old Patagonian goat!—to send a Christian gentleman such a sacrilegious invitation to dinner!—I long to wring his nose

Such was the tenor of my meditation as we pulled up at Ivetsey Bank; and providing myself with a guide, I took a field path for Claxton, with a vague hope that the visit might throw some light upon the state of mind or motives of the individual at whose instance it was undertaken.

It was a glorious, frosty day, the sun making of every dell a valley of diamonds, and turning the sweet, bright air into laughing gas. Having passed the entrance gates, flanked by two handsome lodges, a sylvan road, sweeping through noble vistas of forest trees, led to a broad lawn sloping to the south, whereon stood a spacious mansion, in red brick and the Elizabethan style. As I approached, I was met by an old man, with

silver hair, and a most benevolent countenance, who, accosting me respectfully, inquired my will.

“ I should wish to see the steward.”

“ My name is Baxter, sir,” said the ancient, “ and I’m the steward of Claxton manor, at your service.”

“ My uncle, Mr. Longueville,” I continued, “ wished me, as I was in this neighbourhood, to view the stud, Mr. Baxter ——.”

“ The Lord bless us !” cried the old serving man ; “ but it’s enough to scare one ; the poor, unfortunate beasts ! what’s to come of it ?”

“ Have the goodness,” I observed, “ to send Mr. Longueville’s compliments to the family, and say he requests his nephew may be allowed to inspect the stud.”

“ Anan ?” said the steward. I repeated my demand.

“ I hope no offence,” began Mr. Baxter, slowly, looking at me at the same time, as if to read my answer as well as to hear it. “ I hope you won’t take it amiss, sir, but might

I make bold to ask, if Mr. Longueville is always in his right senses?"

This was a poser, and I was fain to do like others in a similar dilemma—answer by another interrogatory. "Pray what do you mean by so extraordinary a question?"

"Sir," continued the old man, regarding me with a glance of perplexity not unminged with fear; "if you would be so kind as to walk towards the stables ——."

"Let us go there," I replied; and turning a screen of sycamores, we presently entered an extensive quadrangle, the sides being neat, plain brick buildings, with a handsome fountain in the centre. He entered the first door, held it open for me, and then, closing it and shooting a bolt, led to a sort of recess, where a large chair, covered with faded scarlet morocco, stood. First dusting it carefully, he requested me to be seated; and then, without waiting for any observation from me, proceeded at once to his purpose.

"It's now better than two score years, sir, since anybody lived at Claxton manor, besides

myself and my old woman. Hard upon half a century back, my late master, Sir Geoffrey Lyster, left to go to India, as a cadet, I believe they called it. Then the old house was well nigh full; for his father, mother, and five brothers (himself the sixth and youngest) were alive, and likely to live. But death came and soon made clean work, sweeping away root and branch, except the boy who went to meet it in foreign parts.

“Once a year a gentleman came down from London to receive the rents, visit the tenantry, and see to the property. This went on like clockwork for a matter of forty years, when an order arrived to prepare for the baronet’s speedy arrival, letters having come to hand announcing that he had left India, and might be daily expected. Very soon the agent made his appearance, bringing a train of fine London servants, and a stud of horses, whose tails swept the ground, like the Hanoverians the king drives in his stage-coach. ‘Baxter,’ he said, ‘take care that not a hair of those tails is disturbed; the nabob is as

particular about them as his own limbs ; indeed, he is persuaded his life and fortune are influenced by them—that they flourish or decay together.’

“ Well, thus matters remained for some months, when the man of business again appeared, with the news that Sir Geoffrey died on his passage home, bequeathing all his property to a Mr. Longueville, who would be here immediately to take possession. In a few days he came, and without even entering the house, desired to be shown the stables.

“ ‘ Steward,’ said he to me (I was in attendance to answer questions concerning the establishment), ‘ I *had* heard my old friend entertained heathenish notions about horse-tails, but could not have dreamt he carried them to such awful extremities. Tails ! they are caudal enormities never before seen in a Christian land ! Send for all the farriers in the neighbourhood instantly, and have ’em off—d’ye hear ?—within six inches of the back-bone—before the earth opens and swallows us.’

“Never was such a sight seen out of a shambles as these stables an hour afterwards. Here was a row of gory stumps staring you in the face, and a set of horrible fellows searing them with red-hot irons, when the agent rushed in as pale as a ghost with an open letter in his hand.

“ ‘Sir Geoffrey never died at all,’ he faltered out ; ‘on the contrary, he’s alive. And more than that, perhaps in the grounds this very moment. Oh Lord ! there will be murder when he comes. What will he say to such a show as this ?’

“ ‘Say !’ cried Mr. Longueville ; ‘draw his attention to what has been done for his stud, and then ask him if he is prepared to say horses ought to bear boa-constrictors at their nether ends ?’ Upon this he re-entered his travelling chariot and drove away. The news of Sir Geoffrey’s being alive turned out untrue, after all ; but did any gentleman ever see six thousand a-year slip out of his fingers with such a remark as that, who was in his right senses ?”

Having spent a couple of hours in looking about, and learning all I might of the place and its new proprietor's purposes regarding it (though on the latter point the information was very scant), I got back to the posting-house with all speed, and continued my journey.

Once in my carriage, I began seriously to ponder on the probable condition of my uncle's intellects. Prosperity is said to be the most difficult of all human dispensations to bear with philosophy; and might not too much good luck have made him mad? Bedlamite or not, however, it was my especial affair to gain sight and speech of him, promptly; and instead of stopping for the night at Birmingham, after a hasty dinner I was on the road for Cheltenham. It froze intensely, and the ground rang like metal, while, with four spanking cattle, we made good fourteen miles an hour, including stoppages, and, as the church clocks sounded midnight, glided down the High Street and turned into the Montpelier Parade.

“ Which is the house ? ” asked the boy at wheel, of one of the men in the rumble.

“ That with lights in all the lower rooms. Look sharp how you point the pole through the trees.”

“ My uncle at home ? ” I inquired of some twenty feet of footmen, drawn to the door by the approach of a carriage.

“ Mr. Lyster is at home, sir,” replied a fellow, bepowdered and bedizened like a judge of assize, “ but engaged with company ; what name shall I send in ? ”

“ I can announce myself,” I said, passing through the hall lined with lackeys, and into an ante-chamber, beyond which were the drawing-rooms.

All was fragrance and melody ; and in the first of them a most convivial company, so absorbed with itself that I entered without observation. There was a round game, all frolic and fraud ; a whist-table, all caution and chicane ; and miscellaneous flirting parties, where cheating was carried on both in jest and earnest. At the farther end was a

lady at a harp; and with the semblance of listening to her, sat two persons on *chaises longues*. The harpist was a mistress of her instrument; for though it was but a series of modulations she ran over, a hand of skill and a heart of feeling awoke them.

“Sing, love,” said one of the listeners, “something of less pretension than the last—some simple air.”

“A ballad of past scenes and seasons,” she said, striking a few soft sweet chords as symphony—and she sang—

A myrtle round my window twines,
And blooms in beauty there,
When sunlight in its glory shines,
Or storms are dark and drear:
Thus ever cherished as thou art,
Alike in weal or ill,
Near or apart, one constant heart
Shall cling around thee still,
Dear love!
Shall cling around thee still.

When summer smiles, a gentle bird
Sings at my lattice frame;
When winter frowns, its note is heard
To warble still the same:

Thus loved and cherished as thou art,
Alike in weal or ill,
Near or apart, one constant heart
Shall cling around thee still,
Dear love!
Shall cling around thee still.

The music ceased, and the singer, rising abruptly, approached the chair into which I had thrown myself when the song commenced. Tears fell fast and thick upon her cheeks, and she walked like one in a trance, without design, and sightless — for I felt her breath as she passed, but saw me not. I sprang to my uncle's elbow.

“Well met in such worshipful company, sir,” I said, bowing to his companion: “’tis not often haste has such good speed.”

“You have, indeed, been in earnest,” he replied; “and we estimate your obedience. Madame de Beauplans — but you seem not to need an introduction.”

“Mr. Marston is an old acquaintance of mine,” said the lady, giving me one of her blindest smiles; “and of my sister, too.

Charlotte, where are you? — have you nothing kind to say to an old friend? Here is Mr. Marston.”

It was one of the most awful moments of my life! The fair girl thus summoned returned, and I felt a trembling hand in mine. I knew that her eyes were on me, but I dared not meet them. No one spoke: it was a dreadful silence. I grew faint — the room seemed to swim around me; in another moment I should have swooned, when a servant entered to announce that supper was served. In noisy eagerness the gambling groups, grave and gay, broke up.

“Will you give Charlotte your arm, Mr. Lyster?” Caroline said, addressing my uncle as one anticipating no refusal, and with an air of finished indifference taking mine.

As we passed into the adjoining room, she affected to turn her head, and with sudden emphasis whispered into my ear: — “Beware, beware! I know not what to caution you against, but there is a mystery here that bodes evil. To-morrow, as early as you may,

come to me in Landsdowne Crescent. Fail not, for life and death may hang on it."

We reached the supper-table, and, bowing to me, she walked onwards to a vacant chair on my uncle's left hand, her sister being already seated on his right. The nearest decanter stood me in good stead. I sat like one waiting for a shell to explode at his feet. What dark plot was thickening?—what dire catastrophe was at hand?

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CHAPTER IX.

A DISCOVERY.

Morning at the Montpelier Spa—Cheltenham—A meeting—A breakfast and explanations—The world a circulating library—The widow and her son—“Look on this picture and on this”—Life and death—Life and the lively—A pair of brothers, *arcades ambo*.

“With beating hearts, the dire event they wait,
Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate.”

POPE.

“Mischief, thou art afoot.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose, by fearing to attempt
The good we oft might win.”

SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER IX.

Early as the hours are at Cheltenham, where, according to the practice at most water-drinking places, people betake themselves to the public promenades the first thing they do on arising from their beds, I found the walks of the Montpelier Spa already filled by liverless legions, when I sauntered into them at daybreak on the following morning. Whether my visit might, indeed, properly be called an early one, would admit of question, as it certainly did not succeed that Curtian-leap of the lazy, known in naval circles as "turning out." The scene from which, on the previous night, I had retired to my chamber, left me as much disposed towards "the

living couch of fire which it had spread," as for another case of caloric that does not admit of so poetical a description. Having at length consumed the darkness with melancholy meditation and a meerschaum, I strolled forth what time the twilight was at issue with the day.

It was a sad, sickly attempt at morning — as yellow, wheezy, dull, and wobegone as the lazarettes of bile that were doing quarantine under its glimpses. Had there been a gleam of sunshine — the merest elasticity of air — probably my *physique* would, for the moment, have thrown care to the dogs (albeit, the spirit was sore and sorrowing;) for I was young, and nature's posy for the youthful heart is "*dum licet in rebus jucundis vive beatus.*" But notwithstanding destiny, on the honourable principle of compensation, had thrown into contrast lusty life with dusty mortality — health *sans* wealth, with riches *sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, lights, livers, every thing — for once my buoyancy of existence was vanquished, hope was dismasted, and, as

Dibdin sings, I drifted a "sheer hulk" about those cathartic waters.

There, like the "ancient mariner," I might have probably driven to this day, had not one crossed my course well fitted to arouse me from such a sleep of fearful dreams: it was Caroline, and she was alone.

"You are abroad betimes," she said, with well-assumed indifference: "is it the *ton* just now for young gentlemen of fashion to rise at the hour in which Aurora ought and ploughmen do?"

"Madame," I replied, "jest is out of season, at such a moment ——."

"As earnest were out of place. Does monsieur desire to make a scene? would he see himself *planté* in this bed of crocuses? Suffer me to take your arm; we are already objects of remark."

As she spoke she drew me from the broad walk, and, crossing the road which runs parallel with it, we took the field path that led — and perhaps still leads — to Landsdowne Crescent.

“ We breakfast alone,” she observed, as we entered a small library in which the equipage for that meal was laid. “ Charlotte is not well this morning, and we can dispense with her presence,” she continued, as the servant in attendance left the room on being told that his services were no longer required.

“ And now for explanation, whatever it may cost !” fell upon my ears in accents familiar withal, but acute and tuneless ; for life’s rude discord had mingled with the harmony to which nature set them. “ This is neither the time nor the occasion for form or method ; we must understand each other, and at once. I have matter of account to learn. I cannot conjecture what, but presentiment tells me it is no common thing. There is much must be told to you, at whatever expense of feeling, of shame, of remorse.”

She paused for an instant, while a winter of memory seemed to roll over her.

“ My connexion with Launcelot Ridsdale is known to you,” she resumed, and her voice was hoarse and hollow ; “ as also my mar-

riage with M. de Beauplans. On the death of my husband I returned to London, which I left for the Isle of Wight, in consequence of a catastrophe that you are acquainted with." (She spoke of the suicide of C——.) "There I remained till, a few months ago, an outrage committed by Ridsdale forced me to seek security elsewhere. Arriving again in London, I learnt the failure of the firm in whose hands all my funds were deposited, and with the little money I could command I came to this place for a temporary retirement, to await the winding up of my banker's affairs.

"Here I met my sister visiting a distant relative, and first heard of the recent death of our father. The history of my life was a sealed book to her, save a rumour that I had formed a wealthy union abroad; and I had no difficulty in inducing her to become an inmate here. I have sought this interview less from curiosity than caution. Hyde, Charlotte loves with a passion the concentration of her life—intense as the spirit of

superstition, wild as the worship of idolatry. You are the idol of that adoration. Already have I said, 'Beware, beware!' There is a gulf yawning for your soul's perdition. Enough that you have had the warning. * * *

"Soon after my arrival in Cheltenham, I made the acquaintance of the gentleman at whose house I met you last night. From the day of my introduction to him he commenced a course of attentions, whose object admitted of no doubt. He was refined and courteous in his manners, possessed a well-cultivated mind, and a large fortune; but it was impossible to associate love with three-score years. Some ten days ago I received intelligence that my bankers were wholly insolvent, and that every shilling I had lodged with them was irretrievably lost: almost at the same moment I had a visit from Mr. Lyster, with an offer of his hand.

"I lost no time in acquainting him with the utter ruin which had overtaken me, and gratefully but decidedly declined his proposal. On the following day he transmitted

through his agent a deed whereby he assigned to me absolutely, and without stipulation of any kind, estates yielding six thousand a year in the county of Stafford, together with his domain of Claxton Manor. Last night I took that deed back, and told him the only condition on which I could accept his prodigal gift would be as his wife. Our union will be a speedy one. With gratitude for the foundation, I do not despair of a superstructure making up in stability what it may lack in grace."

Why has life never been compared to a circulating library, and each of its coteries to a romance, or, at the least, a novel in three volumes post octavo? Out of materials that might have belonged to the most ordinary career, how strange and fearful a plot was weaving its meshes around me! Slowly the working of its machinery was being developed: what the final event would bring about was a mystery I hardly dared wish to penetrate.

Still my own agency was not to be com-

mitted to chance : that was within my own control, and I was responsible for its consequences. The discovery of the miserable results to which my uncle's change of name might have led was effected in time to prevent the perpetration of an act that could not have been undone : this was, at least, a consolation, whatever else might come of it. The urgency of the case was too immediate to admit of my delaying an explanation ; towards one of those whom it concerned, indeed, delicacy as to the mode of making it was unnecessary.

Let the world's sophists legislate for moral latitude as they may — let mothers angle for young “profitables,” with tender bait properly prepared, and find favour in virtuous eyes—let fathers barter their daughters, without respect of person, to the best bidders in money and matrimony, and be still accounted “honourable men ;” but, be convention never so courteous and convenient, that woman is doubly forsworn traitor to her sex, whose heart is not the herald of her hand. She is

a perjurer if she vow at the altar to love without assurance that her oath can be sacredly fulfilled; she is — what may not be written — if she make her passion wait upon her purpose !

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“Caroline,” I said, “few words must serve to convey intelligence as deeply concerning yourself as the revelation *you* have made has affected *me*. This marriage can never take place. He, whom you know as Lyster, is that uncle Longueville, whose presumptive heir you have so often heard me say I had reason to believe myself. Enough that you know the relation in which we stand towards each other, to feel such connexion is impossible between you and him. But how is he to be told it? In what manner is a phantasy to be put an end to, whose very indulgence is a scandal?”

I deal with character as I have experienced it : not haply such as it is met with in life's common round, but as it has made or marred the fortunes of those who moved in more eccentric orbits.

Of these not the least remarkable was she who with pale cheek and flashing glance listened as I spoke. When I ceased, she made no reply, but seemed to wait, as in the hope or fear of hearing more. It was a pause too full of thought for speech, but it suggested the necessity for action too forcibly to allow of much deliberation. Daintiness of expression would not only have been out of place—it would have been full of danger. The evil hand would soon be put to the work the evil heart was engendering, unless the power of offence were crushed at once.

Rising from the untouched meal, I continued: —“In whatever manner communicated, my uncle must instantly be taught the idleness of his present design: he must be told ——.”

“That I am base — by him who made me so! A noble achievement — an honourable earnest for a fair domain!”

“Caroline,” I said, with such composure as I could command, “in the scorn and bitterness of maturity, there is neither propitia-

tion nor atonement for the follies or the vices of youth. The most desperate property of sin is recklessness, because the offender is an alien from the will as well as the way of virtue. It shall not be thus with me, at all events.

“The duty I have to perform shall be done as becomes a man, at the same time as befits a gentleman. You will leave this place—you will cease to afford my uncle facility for interviews that can lead to no result but pain and mortification to one who has high claims on your consideration: the rest I must myself care for.”

On my return, I found the preliminaries of explanation anticipated by the presence of my mother. She had arrived from Brighton the preceding evening, and was closeted with her brother. Our meeting was a melancholy one—gloomy would indeed describe it better. Her grief was full of natural earnestness, but it was sorrow without the tenderness which is not only the graceful but the truthful test of its sincerity. Family affairs had formed

the subject of their discussion, and I could see that she had been made the depositary of a secret, which, at the same moment, probably, was confided to myself. The widow's "inky suit" aggravated the cold expression of her face and the stern character of her figure; yet there was more cordiality in her manner than it usually wore, and, if it was not love, it was the strong instinct of nature that moved me towards her.

"It will embitter my own last hour," she said, "that I was not with him in his: it was a death wherein we were doubly parted—but we shall soon be united again—for ever and without end."

"I have a small casket, my mother," I observed, with the design of interrupting reflections which too painfully weighed upon her heart, "that I discovered among my father's private papers, with an inscription intimating a desire that it should be placed by me in your possession. I will do so now."

Having broken a seal attached to the clasp, I took from it two miniatures; one represent-

ing a youth, blooming into the golden summer of manhood—the other, a bright and bird-like girl, in the sunny springtide of existence ; the former I put into her hands—the latter I retained.....

What is death?—what life? The dead man that I had seen laid within his grave, “ to lie in cold obstruction and to rot,” did he differ more from the fair youth of the one picture, than the living woman at my side, wan as marble and rigid as a statue, from the blithe and glowing maiden of the other? My mother, too, was moved by meditations not less anxious than my own, but she also thought in silence, and spoke rather from habit, than plan or purpose.

“ Shall you remain here, Hyde, any space of time?—and what are your intentions about Shropshire? Your uncle will return with me to Brighton in a few days : I wished to go to-morrow, but he appears to have engagements which detain him here a while. What a spoiled child of fortune he has been from the cradle ! What a strange chain of circumstance helped

him to that Staffordshire property ! Has he had any communication with you in reference to the latter ?”

“ None whatever ; and from his abrupt change of name, as I conclude, my letters from B——, announcing the illness of my father, and subsequently its fatal issue, never reached him. Your design of inducing him to accompany you into Sussex gives me great satisfaction. You will conceal from him that I have urged you to hasten his departure, a step I entreat you to precipitate by every means in your power. Presently I will show you how vitally it concerns his happiness, his peace of mind, that he absent himself—for some time at least—from Cheltenham. Do not inquire the reason now ; I know you can bring this about if you will. I am sure you *will*, because it is of such great concern to him, to yourself, and to your son.”

My uncle’s extraordinary epistle, in which he spoke of his brother’s being “ quietly in-urned in the family vault,” thereby alluding to his metaphorical burial in a country-house,

alone, at Christmas, was explained by the failure of my letters having left him in ignorance of the bereavement I had suffered ; while the position of affairs at Cheltenham proved that my father's hints touching the state of the ancient gallant were too prophetic. These lights, however, threw anything but a pleasant radiance around my own situation, which was without one solitary ray of comfort or consolation, save that the effort to redeem it might serve to distract my spirit from its bitter fancies, whatever the result of the attempt.

In these days, when excitement grows small by such desperate degrees that a sensation is as scarce as an earthquake, how many a fine gentleman would give a handsome premium for the doubt and anxiety in which I strode forth into the air at the conclusion of that interview ! As I paced moodily onwards, I looked askance with a grim satisfaction on the lank limbs and vinegar visages that were gliding about like slovenly ghosts in a murky cockerow. It was a pleasure to see and feel

that there were others apparently not much better off than myself.

Thus did I plod my weary way, full of disquiet and racking anxiety, to the scene of my morning's interview—by no means heavily disappointed when the servant informed me that the lady of the mansion was not visible.

I felt assured Caroline was at home ; but so many conflicting feelings had been at work for the last twelve hours, that I had become supine from absolute exhaustion. The wane of the afternoon, to one in doubt, or debt, or the depths of blue-devilism, heralds a relief for which he must be graceless indeed who does not feel a lively gratitude. I knew a spherical little major of twenty stone, belonging to a light infantry corps, who never heard the dinner bugles sound without ejaculating—“ Ah, the Lord be praised ! there's another day gone beautifully.”

The hour that used to draw this daily thanksgiving from my friend, the fat field-officer, was at hand as I turned into the

High Street from my fruitless visit. As usual, it was full of idlers ; on that occasion, the most prominent group being a rollicking knot of Irishmen in red coats, recounting their exploits with Colonel Berkeley.

“ You’ll feed with us at seven at the Royal,” said D— B—, “ in honour of the thaw ; one would think the frost always came at this season on purpose to spoil sport. Let us only have open winters, and it may snow and freeze all the summer months if it pleases.”

How was it possible, in the present pressure of my circumstances, to refuse the invitation of such a philosopher ?

When the reader entered Cheltenham with me, some chapters back, I told him that it was an eccentric rendezvous twenty years ago, so far as regarded the Hibernian portion of its visitors ; perhaps the catastrophe of this dinner may serve to prove that position. The party consisted of about a dozen—the chairman being an Irish nobleman, married, but unblest with a family ; and the vice-chairman his only brother, and consequently heir to the title,

should the peer die without issue. Both were characters. The feast was held in a drawing-room on the first floor; and over the wine the morning runs were hunted again, as a matter of course on such occasions. During the discussion, the brothers took precisely different views of each other's achievements. This begat hard words, menaces, defiances, and finally a fight—first in the room, and then on the landing-place, finished by the vice-president knocking the president down stairs, and an awful groan as the peer's head came in contact with the hall-flags. The guests testified concern at the probable homicide, and a Mr. Mac-something descended to ascertain the amount of mischief. In a few moments he returned; and stepping up to the honourable vice-chair, who was bathing his nose in a finger-glass, said, with great composure and consideration—“*Faith, it's all over: you've killed him at last, MY LORD!*”

CHAPTER X.

AN O'ER-TRUE TALE.

London, and a not unnatural consequence, the meeting with a rascal—Scene, a theatre—The keeping not lost by the place of encounter—How the windy stomach is prone to grumble—A horrid history, which shews that fact is stranger than fiction—An incident in real life, whose outline is a household tradition in the county of ———.

“ Blood hath been shed ere now i' th' olden time,
Ere human statute purged the general weal ;
Ay! and since, too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear.”

Macbeth.

“ The pair you see
Now friends below, in close embraces join :
But when they leave the shady realms of night,
With mortal hate each other shall pursue.”

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER X.

The following morning I breakfasted alone with my mother, the host being absent, from a cause there was little difficulty in accounting for. At noon he appeared, with an outward man which assured me my surmises were correct. In the course of an early stroll, I learnt that Madame de Beauplans had left Cheltenham on the previous night, a piece of information with which he was clearly also supplied, for he looked as only a lover of three score and ten can look, with the prospect of a buxom widow of five and twenty being ravished from his arms. The presence of a septuagenarian Romeo in such a predicament was not calculated to dispel the unpleasant

constraint which had grown out of the morning's meal. Subjects of a painful nature had been introduced and treated by my mother with her usual violence, and she exhibited a spirit of entire selfishness that blighted in the bud the kindness with which our fellowship of bereavement had begun to affect me towards her. The discussion of present plans, however, forthwith commenced, and afforded probably the only specific that could have been devised for our several ill humours. It was settled that my uncle should return with his sister on the morrow to Brighton, where I promised to join them at Christmas, and, in the meanwhile, to accompany them as far as town. This scheme was duly put into execution so far as it related to its last provision, and, bidding adieu for a while to my eccentric relatives, I once more found myself in London.

It is quite bad enough to sit down to a cutlet at Long's on a suicidal November night, in the forlorn hope that the other man in town may drop in to do his dismal dinner also; but it is positive despair to be told that he left the

day before for Melton, and to discover that you are *the* gentle gentleman of May Fair. This was in the present instance precisely my case, and, therefore, the most sublimely fastidious will probably make allowances for my having gone to Drury Lane to see the play. In all the confidence of seclusion, I took my place in the front row of the stage-box, and, *lorgnette* in hand, surrendered myself to the cunning of the scene. It was presently obvious, however, that the grace of remaining *perdu*, like most other mortal hopes, was not likely to be fulfilled: of which certain glasses directed against me from a private box on the opposite side of the house afforded assurance. Whoever the inmates might be, I speedily understood that they were as determined not to be seen, as to see; the affair of observation being wholly carried on from the cover of the curtains of their embrasure. At length, during an interval between the acts, one of the party, a man, enveloped in a cloak of rich furs, stood for a few moments forward. I scanned him minutely, and when he retired,

felt convinced I had seen him before, but without being able to recal the occasion. I puzzled my brains about it, which was something gained ; and then I began to fancy there was a mystery or the like connected with the stranger, and that was a great deal : excitement at such a season was a prodigious blessing. The party arose at the conclusion of the play, and I rose also—to see at least what the artillery corps might consist of. In a few minutes, they approached the place where I stood, and passed hurriedly to their carriage—the unknown of the furs having Madame de Beauplans on one arm and Charlotte G—— on the other.

An involuntary impulse caused me to evade their notice, but I followed them with my eyes, and, as the door of the carriage closed, I observed a wretched-looking man rush towards it. What he said did not reach me, but the window was drawn up violently, and the applicant, whatever the nature of the request, took nothing by his attempt.

The night was piercingly cold, and, button-

ing my coat around my throat, I prepared to make the best of my way to my fireside. As I strode rapidly across Covent Garden, the miserable-looking man came up with me, and laying on my arm a hand which shook as with an ague, he said :

“ For God’s sake, give me the means to procure food ! I am perishing of hunger.”

The singularity of the appeal, as well as a consciousness that the speaker’s voice was familiar, made me moderate my pace.

“ I know you,” he continued, “ and though I have little claim to your compassion, save me from the horrid death which is consuming me, and I may do you service.”

We had by this time reached the door of an obscure tavern in New Street.

“ If your necessity is so extreme,” I said, “ you can get some kind of refreshment here ;” and I led him into a sort of coffee-room, with a small fire smouldering in the grate, and a considerable smell of beer and tobacco. Like a famishing wolf, he threw himself upon such victuals as the place afforded, and I measured

his squalid figure with astonishment at the feats it was performing, and curiosity as to the result of the adventure.

Having concluded his meal, or rather discontinued it because there was nothing more to eat, and washed it down with a desperate draught that drained a huge pewter vessel of its dregs, he spoke again.

“Can you not remember me ? is all trace of my former self quite destroyed ?”

“I do not, though I have certainly heard your voice before.”

“Well, I will delay making myself known till I have introduced another, whom you likewise met to-night, that probably you may also have forgotten : did you know who the gentleman was that you watched enter a carriage with two ladies ?”

“It struck me I had seen him before, but on what occasion I cannot call to mind.”

“Then I will tell you ;—that was Charles —— : you will hardly have ceased to recollect the scene in which last you met him—that was Charles ——,” said the beggar, his

voice becoming hoarser and husky as he pronounced the name "Charles ——." "I entreated him for alms to save me from starvation, and he answered me with a curse—— which shall be repaid him, but not with words — not with words — not with words! Mr. Marston — you see I know you — leave me now: to-morrow at this hour meet me here, and I will tell you that, as I promised, which may serve you well. Leave me also a little money, to purchase shelter from this bitter night, a luxury to which I have been a stranger longer than I could have wished, or once anticipated. To-morrow, at this hour, you will see me again, if you can condescend to give rendezvous to a ragged wretch in a pothouse."

Despite the curiosity I felt to learn what my new acquaintance might have to communicate, it was by no means with much reluctance I tore myself from him, adopting his suggestion as to funds, by depositing "some certain coins of silver" in his most natural-looking palm, at the same time hint-

ing that it would be as well rather to turn them into a roosting-place than rum-and-water, if only for the sake of variety.

Before the reader is brought again in contact with him, it is necessary that a sad incident, of which I was a witness in early life, should be related, as well to explain his allusions in the preceding conversation, as to serve as an exposition of the strange story he subsequently revealed.

The family of —— was one of the most ancient and wealthy in the county of L——. At the period when first my knowledge of it commenced, its representative was a youth of some sixteen or eighteen years, who, with an only brother, one year his junior, I met at the races of P——. A noble fortune, increased by a long minority, made him an object of no small consideration, and he occupied a prominent position already in popular regard. I understood that he had lately arrived from one of the Universities, whither he was to return, accompanied by his brother, whose ultimate destination was the Temple,

his bias leading him to the law as a profession. A few years passed, and, when next I met the squire of——, it was at cover side, as a master of foxhounds, the barouche from which he descended being occupied by a young and lovely girl—the bride of a yet existing honeymoon. The state of man rarely exhibits one of such perfect promise as in the instance of that young bridegroom. Fortune, having first dowered him in her prodigality, sent him forth on his career decked with every personal endowment, polished in manners and in mind, and graced with as fair a helpmate as ever bloomed in her own land of witchery. Soon came the fruit worthy of such blossoms, and an infant heir was born to the broad lands of ——.

About this time the circle of —— Hall was increased by a visit from the squire's brother, who had, for a year or two, been an inmate of the Temple. A more striking change the same lapse of time never, perhaps, effected in the appearance of any human being. It was at the hunt-ball that I saw

him on his return to L——shire; and for the joyous, open-countenanced, lusty youth that two brief years before had gone forth so full of ingenuous worth and high spirits, there stood, or glided sullenly among those with whom he was associated, but appeared to share no common feeling, a dark and lonely man, whose attenuated form and sunken eye spoke of vigils of unrest. To deep study, and the generous ambition of an energetic spirit, the alteration that all observed was by all attributed; but the true cause was of a far different character. Just previous to Charles ——'s career as a law student, peace had thrown open the continent; and a brief sojourn in Paris had implanted the germ of a taste for play, which a London residence was then speedily calculated to ripen into a rooted passion. And here may I be allowed a word of digression? Among prevailing fallacies, there is not one stronger or more eminently unjust than the conventionality that libels the present era as one in which gaming is carried to greater lengths, and more widely

practised, than in that which preceded it. The vice may be more shameless, may beard us "in our streets" with a more palpable effrontery; but, so far from being more general and destructive than in the days of our sires, the utter reverse is the fact. If we had no positive demonstration that such was the case, the universal growth of a taste for reading and a thirst for information would at least furnish us with a fair inference. But we have far more positive data for our guide. A few years ago an unfortunate investigation, connected with the Travellers' Club, brought that society and its details prominently before the public. The circumstances disclosed upon that occasion clearly proved that it was not an assembly where gambling to any considerable amount was carried on; and yet there *was* a time when in one year the whist account of the Travellers' Club amounted to the enormous sum of *six hundred thousand pounds!*

To return to the habits which the young Templar had acquired in the French capital

and their results. Very soon after his return to England he had become a professed gamester. The party from whom I learned this portion of his story was himself deeply initiated in play at the period, and was a winner from him very largely. It appears that his resources (which were considerable) were soon exhausted ; and before the visit to —— Hall, of which I am speaking, his reputation as a fair and honourable player was more than questioned. A Polish servant, that he had picked up in Paris, was suspected not only of having instructed him in several subtleties of the cards and dice, but as having in disguise acted, upon many occasions, as his confederate at the public tables adjacent to St. James's. This man had accompanied him to L——shire, where, it is hardly necessary to say, all that has been stated of his life and pursuits was unknown even to individual surmise, and of course to his own family, who would naturally be the last to hear sinister reports, even had they gained a general publicity. His arrival at his brother's seat took

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placeduring the Christmas holidays — a festival in the country peculiarly devoted to domestic festivity, serving as a reunion for good fellowship and social interchanges. — Hall was a scene of perpetual hospitality and merry-making, scarcely allowing leisure for its inmates to observe the cold reserve and distant courtesy with which the new guest shared, or rather suffered, the gaieties which surrounded him. Field sports formed the chief of the morning engagements, and of these he rarely partook, urging want of taste as well as of skill for absenting himself from them. Until the hour for dinner, his own apartment seemed to afford employment for his whole time ; occasionally a solitary stroll in the park alone interfering with the uniformity of confinement he had adopted.

Thus the winter wore away, and spring arrived ; and though for months dwelling beneath the same roof, the brothers had but few opportunities for the renewal of early feelings, or the generation of new. Their intercourse, on the part of the host, was marked by

a warm, ingenuous cordiality ; by the guest, these demonstrations were met by no want of courtesy, but by an apathy and apparent abstraction, which was soon observed, and attributed by some to the effect of severe study, as before alluded to, and by others to the existence of an attachment in which love's course did not run smooth. The day appointed by Charles —— for his return to town had arrived, when an accident occurred which produced a temporary postponement of his design. On the last day of the season, his brother, towards the close of a severe run, met with a heavy fall, his horse coming down, and lying for some time upon him. The casualty was productive of no dangerous consequences ; but a wound had been inflicted, which not only imposed a temporary confinement, but required the daily offices of a surgeon. By some chance, the village practitioner was absent, and as —— Hall was at a considerable distance from the county town, the daily visit of a medical man was attended with much inconvenience. In this dilemma,

Charles made offer to his brother of the services of his valet, who possessed a good general knowledge of surgery, having served in some department of the medical staff at an early period of his life. A short trial having proved him adroit at the dressings, &c.; and the medical gentleman pronouncing him a fitting substitute, the invalid was committed to his charge, the necessary salves being prepared and sent as occasion required. The wound, however, did not fare as at first there was reason to expect. It yielded but slowly, if at all, to the mode of treatment pursued; and as the student became anxious to depart, it was arranged that he should go, leaving his servant behind, to follow as soon as circumstances might permit his services being dispensed with.

A month elapsed, and real cause of anxiety arose. The injury outwardly received was neither better nor worse, but the general health of the patient declined rapidly. Even those who saw him hourly were startled at the progress of decay and enfeeblement that

seemed to stride onwards with ominous velocity ; while those who saw him for the first time, after the interval of a few weeks, looked upon him as already numbered with the dead. The malady had now assumed too serious a character to admit of an hour's being lost without application to the best advice that the country could afford. Accordingly, a removal to London was recommended, and at once acted upon ; the invalid offering no objection, nor evincing any desire either for or against this step. From the date of his brother's departure, his case presented the singular anomaly of a man in the prime of life and noon of lustihood, without apparent ailment of any kind, and quite unconscious of pain or bodily infirmity, hourly and steadily parting with vitality, and passing out of existence, as it were, by a geometrical progression of decay. His disease baffled the combined skill of the metropolitan faculty. It was not consumption—at least it developed none of the characteristics of that malady, though its effects were as rapid and evidently would be as fatal.

All appetite had forsaken him; a mortal apathy, which even the presence of his young bride and infant son failed to rouse into temporary sensibility, shrouded all his faculties in a premature grave. The sole desire he gave expression to was to be supplied with his meerschaum, which his Polish attendant was accustomed to prepare for him at the commencement of his illness, and now probably was merely required from the strength of habit. Of course it was given, and the mechanical use of it was the only voluntary act by which his consciousness of existence was betrayed.

The crisis was not long in arriving; the hour of departure was at hand, and it was preceded by that gleam of passing reason, that flash of sensibility, which so frequently and so mysteriously lights up the twilight of existence. It would be ill to dwell on the tearing asunder of young hearts, whose fibres were woven together—who had never known care, but that which told they might be parted!

To furnish, were it needed, one example more that human hopes are even as the chaff that the wind scattereth—life like a dream that passeth away—ere three and twenty summers had ripened the promise of a goodly harvest, the blight had stricken it: the tomb of a long line of ancestors closed upon the ill-fated lord of —— Hall.

The death of his brother had wrought no change in the life or pursuits of Charles; on the contrary, his propensity for play had become, if possible, more inveterate than ever, and the reputation of his gaming was daily growing infamous. His former companions had long ceased to associate with him, though they had not gone the length of withdrawing a passing acknowledgment, when chance threw them together in public.

The remnants of his fortune had been completely exhausted during his brother's lifetime; and it was known that even the source which had supplied him for a short time, after the melancholy event already related, upon the desperate chance of his surviving the infant

heir to the estate (of course upon terms as ruinous as the hazard was—all but hopeless) had finally closed against him. Even the dicer's hope no longer remained. His want of funds, and the discovery of several attempts at fraud, in which he was assisted by the Pole, who still adhered to him in the apparent capacity of servant, caused him to be scrupulously excluded from every house of play in the metropolis. Ruin had arrived, and it was whispered that worse had been deserved, and would have betided, but for the exertions of those who, when the peril was extreme, could not forget claims, though tenfold forfeited. Thus was he circumstanced, when, having been nominated one of the guardians of the infant heir of —, he once more arrived in L——shire.

His reception by the widowed lady was courteous, but certainly not cordial. I can perfectly well remember seeing them together at the time, (for the most trivial events connected with the parties were indelibly written upon my memory by the awful catastrophe

which imparted to them such terrible interest) and feeling that the London lawyer was far from a welcome guest at —— Hall.

The annual spring coursing at Lord ——'s, whose seat is but a few miles from ——, had made me a temporary inmate there, though it was still the house of mourning; the intimacy of our family with that of —— causing the invitation, which I had been accustomed to receive upon the occasion, to be extended even to a breach of the rule which excluded all other visitors. I was not sorry when the termination of the meeting brought the morning for my departure. At fourteen we are not physically suited to the company of those who mourn, and I had found my visit a most lugubrious sojourning. In fact, save at meals, I was quite alone; the young widow secluding herself entirely with her infant son; and the uncle, with his dark, sinister eyes, and cold, repulsive manners, affording at least one cause of obligation—that he gave us almost as little of his society as we desired. I can, however, recal the morning arranged for my departure,

and I still feel the restlessness of his manner during breakfast, and the ill-grace, the annoyance, with which he received my intimation of remaining until after luncheon. It may be that after-events have given a colouring to these reminiscences; but I think my impressions at that time were as I give them now.

Luncheon was concluded, and I had risen to take my leave, when a party of itinerant musicians and jugglers appeared at the window of the room in which we were seated. They were quickly engaged in their performances; and, as the exhibition was not without merit, it was proposed that we should ascend to an upper apartment whence a better view could be commanded, as we were then on a level with the performers. I know not, at this moment, from whom the proposal came, but it was acted upon, and we stationed ourselves at the windows of a room on the second floor, as the verandah which surrounded the basement story interfered with the view from the floor immediately over it. The exhibition consisted of the usual feats of legerdemain,

tumbling, and fire-eating; the actors were two young men, who alternately displayed on the pandeans and big drum, and one who seemed master of the troop, and who busied himself in preparing something that was intended as a *coup de théâtre*. There were three windows in the room, and, as well as my memory will serve me, the centre one was occupied by the mother, her child, and the nurse; while Charles ——— and I stood at those on either side. That he whom I set down as the master was very earnest in his scrutiny of the party looking on, and that there was a strange abruptness in the commencement of his part of the performance, I confess were after-thoughts; but not the less convinced am I that it was no idle fancy. Two smart strokes upon the drum were followed by half a dozen rapid explosions of no great power; at the last of which something like a small shell burst, and threw out various coloured lights. While these were yet visible, a large shell was ignited, and instantly we were encompassed with volumes of dense

smoke that shrouded lawn and building in the darkness of night; there succeeded an explosion so terrific, so astounding, that it seemed to rend in pieces the walls within which we stood—and then, O God! shall I ever cease to hear the shriek that would have cleft the roar of Heaven's thunder, or forget the look of stone that the receding vapours revealed, with which the wretched lady at my side gazed upon the mass of mangled gore that alone remained to her of the child of her widowed idolatry—the lord of the broad lands of ——!

CHAPTER XI.

A GAMBLER'S LIFE.

A morning in New Street, Covent Garden — Curiosity makes us acquainted with unsavoury society — An Israelite, in whom there is much guile and a good deal of brandy and water — He finishes his story and all the liquor on the table — An early acquaintance on the tapis — A journey — A voyage — A company of the free and easy sort — Their harmony.

“ O, villain! villain! abhorred, unnatural villain!”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ Talents, 'tis true, quick, various, bright, has God
To Virtue oft denied, on Vice bestowed :
Just as fond Nature lovelier colours brings
To deck the insects than the eagle's wings.
But those of man, the high-born, nobler part,
The ethereal energies that touch the heart—
These, Virtue, these to thee alone belong.”

CHARLES GRANT.

“ Rude was navigation then.”

DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XI.

On a lugubrious metropolitan morning I set forth to keep tryst with my recently acquired confident, at his hostel in New Street, Covent Garden. He was at breakfast, and, however he might have treated my advice about going to bed, he had certainly not exhibited much respect for it, so far as related to the affair of his potations. Though I took the precaution to give him a wide berth, the odour of grog was almost too much for my forenoon fastidiousness of fragrance, notwithstanding I must do him the justice to say, he had corrected it by a liberal infusion of garlic.

His face and hands had been submitted to

soap and water, but the former had not benefitted by the process ; in fact, just the contrary ; for it had compelled his cambric into melancholy relief, and deprived his features of the shading which toned down their unearthly hue and expression. Certainly there never was a much less prepossessing exterior. His toilette was the superlative of “ shocking bad ;” while his countenance, unlike any existing image to which it might be compared, may be faintly sketched by fancying the fashion in which the property-man of a puppet-show would be likely to get up Punch in the last stage of consumption : in short, his visage was that of an Israelite, in whom there was much guile, and little or no nourishment.

He rose at my entrance, and offered me the courtesies of the day, a polite attention I could have as well dispensed with, as the chamber at the time was also occupied by a couple of tinkers, who were pouring their oblations to Aurora from chalices of XX. These presently took their departure, and we were alone.

“With your leave,” said the Levite—there was no mistaking the badge of his tribe—“with your leave, I’ll call for a little cold water—and brandy.”

I offered no objection to the proposal. This having been served, and of course tasted, or *tested*—we won’t dispute about terms—the man of rags threw off reserve, and thus began.

“Still you do not recognize me: can it be that dress (he might have said the want of it,) or circumstance is powerful enough to negative identity?—and must I tell you the unfortunate you saved in his worst strait was once but too well known to you as Von Hoffman—you start—and still earlier as the valet of Charles ——, at the period of the catastrophe at Hall, of which you were a witness?

“But let not this declaration move you: there is that to be told which you will need good nerves to listen to. At all events, hear me with patience: let not natural indignation prevent attention to details, which for the

common debt all owe to society, claim an earnest and solemn regard. You are astonished at the language in which I address you—it belongs to the education I received—its counterfeit which I used when you first knew me, and the craft I then practised : I allude to my *rôle* of the Baron Von Hoffman.

“ I am by birth a Pole, a native of Warsaw, where I was brought up to the profession of medicine. As my family possessed good means, I was sent for several years to study anatomy in London, and on my return to my native city I knew English better than my natural tongue. My father died, when I was twenty years of age, leaving me a sum in ready money sufficient to have secured a handsome independence for life. But I had already become a professed gamester, and deeply versed in all the arcana of play. Still I was no match for the gangs of experienced dicers at the time abounding in the most licentious capital in Europe. Soon beggared in fortune and fame, I was compelled to fly from the

consequences of a crime into which destitution and a naturally desperate spirit had hurried me. Having, after many hazards, reached Constantinople, I abandoned my faith, adopted the turban, and entered the Turkish navy as a surgeon's mate to one of their splendid frigates.

“I had fled from my country, but not from that which had made me a fugitive. The spirit of play was still within me, busy, restless as ever, and there was no want of opportunity for its indulgence among my associates of the Crescent. A lengthened detention in the Bosphorus afforded me ample occasion for cultivating the dissipation of the Turkish metropolis, of which my assumed naturalization permitted me the range whenever it suited my inclination, and my duty allowed. Involvement and difficulties beset me; and when no hope seemed left, I made the chance acquaintance of an Armenian physician at one of the baths. He was also a heavy player, and like myself had suffered largely. This man proposed that we should become confe-

derates, and I accepted his offer. You know the universal taste for the pipe in Turkey. It was a part of his plan that measures should be taken for introducing into the tobacco used at the coffee-houses to which we resorted to play certain narcotics with which he was familiar, that when smoked produced a '*kief*,' or placid intoxication.

“ This scheme we pursued with great success for a time, but it was followed by results we certainly never contemplated. All those who used the tobacco so prepared became more or less indisposed. Suspicion was aroused ; and, while a keen *surveillance* was kept upon all who frequented the house, two of its most constant guests and emphatic smokers died. Our situation now became one of considerable danger. Your Turk don't stand on ceremony as to the use of the bow-string, and our lives were held upon a rather insecure tenure. Once more, therefore, I was a wanderer ; and Paris, ever the refuge of crime, cunning, desperation, or despair, wherever engendered or however begot, became my resting-place.

“The career of play, again began, soon left me as penniless as before. In this condition, having run the gauntlet of scorn and contumely in the *salons* which had been enriched by my plunder, while debating between a meerschaum of my own tobacco and the Morgue, accident threw me in the path of him whose menial I appeared to be during our abode at his brother's seat in Lancashire. I was of use to him in a broil, in which he was concerned at the notorious *numero* —— in the Palais Royal, and, as I seemed to possess qualities he might turn to account, he offered me the situation of confidential servant—and my necessity accepted his offer. A short experience, however, enabled Mr. Charles —— to discover that I was in a position for which I was not suited, while there was one in which my talents might be made infinitely more available. In short, he elected me his confederate of the play-table, and in that capacity I played so successful a game that Paris soon became too hot for both master and man.

“These vicissitudes may seem extraordinary to you, yet they are but the ordinary routine consequent upon the trade in which I embarked. Could you read the true histories of the men who, in braided coats, *ormolu* jewellery, and moustachios, swagger or sneak, feast or famish, among the hells of St. James’s, you would find that nine-tenths of them have been hunted out of half the capitals of Europe.

“But this is from my purpose. On our arrival in London it was judged convenient I should enact the valet, both in its English downright and French unright signification. In defiance of every stratagem, however, our resources melted away rapidly, and one heavy loss gave them the *coup de grace*. It was obvious, too, that if the nature of our connexion was not actually discovered, it had become the subject of canvass, and a temporary removal was again the most prudent step that remained to us. In this originated that visit to Lancashire during which Charles —— became known to you. At that period he was

in every respect a ruined man : not a guinea of patrimony was left : his credit was utterly gone, and his honour more than mistrusted.

“ Even this was not the worst : there were others to be affected by his loss of fortune—others, who monopolized the only natural feeling that survived in the gambler’s heart ! It was a subject on which he always spoke with reserve ; but I contrived to glean from him that, in one of his play excursions beyond the Alps, he had formed a connexion with an Italian girl, a Neapolitan dancer of rare beauty, who brought him children. She had died in giving birth to the second ; but in the first born, his soul seemed garnered. He never alluded to her without an emotion, whose truth and intensity were evidences of the great moral principle, that ‘ none are all evil.’ How often, when weaving some dark plot, or devilish device, have I heard him murmur, ‘ If I succeed, it will be all for her : for my dark-eyed daughter—for my pearl above price !’

“ It was in this terrible necessity that he

resolved on a visit to his elder brother ; and the obscure hints occasionally given during my first knowledge of him, concerning *one* obstacle that lay between him and fortune, took a palpable form. Soon after our arrival, he threw off all reserve, and, that the impediment should be forthwith removed, became understood between us. Presently we took counsel together as to the most convenient and securest means of effecting our purpose : numerous plans were devised, but as constantly thwarted by one accident or other. The danger of a violent attempt was too imminent, and there seemed no hope of bringing it about by any other course. We had almost come to the resolution of abandoning the project, and once more trying what might turn up in the metropolis, when an occurrence suggested to me a scheme we had unaccountably before overlooked.

“ A severe fall in hunting, by which his brother was wounded externally, made the daily attendance of a surgeon necessary. There had been a difficulty in obtaining such at-

tendance from the distance of —— Hall from the residence of any respectable practitioner, and then at last it flashed upon Charles —— that the occasion he desired had arrived. He proposed that, as I was versed in the common practice of surgery, the dressing of the wound should be committed to me, for which purpose I could remain in the country while he pursued his way to town. The offer was cheerfully accepted, and we parted with an understanding that could not be expressed in speech. The patient desired relief from pain. I found that which soothed him in body and spirit. His physician approved of his smoking: in preparing his meerschaum I did not forget the secret I had learned in the east. The great strength of his constitution, however, made my labour a work of time: he was taken for the sake of more eminent advice to town, and it was not till after many months that my commission was executed."

The murderer paused, and looked at me with eyes of stone. My blood froze—my flesh crept—I was sick to death. The room seemed

to whirl around. Probably I was at the point of swooning, for he rose, and was about to lay hands on me. The act restored my senses in an instant. I recoiled from his touch with the energy of horror: the wretch saw and understood it. The scene in all its squalid abomination is clearly before me now, despite the long vista of years through which it is seen. The fetid stench of that murky chamber is again present: I see a face livid as that of a corpse: stark want, fierce licentiousness, contempt of consequence, covetousness of crime, scorn of hope, are written upon it in the stern, straight characters of despair. He had fallen back upon the bench from which he rose, and thrown open the narrow foul casement to catch a breath of the humid air. O world! world! manifold as are thy forms of misery, spare us sight of that from which wild need has driven the soft sweet charities, or in which a life of vice has smothered all sense of sin and shame! After a while he resumed.

“ We now concluded that the worst of our

difficulty was over, but we had miscalculated our undertaking. True, the tree had been uprooted, and it was but the tender flower that bloomed beneath which remained to be disposed of: but that was covered by the most impenetrable of all shields, the triple brass of a mother's love! I will not recount the fruitless attempts that were made to destroy the infant heir of ——. That which succeeded shall be told: I would bring these confessions to an end. You have no doubt heard that it was while witnessing the performance of a party of jugglers the child lost its life. That catastrophe was not of my contrivance, though I acted a prominent part in it. I was leader of the band of mimes, and in that capacity brought about the explosion, in the noise and confusion of which Charles —— struck the heir of —— from the nurse's arms, and helped himself to wealth and wide domains through the blood of his brother's son.

“Soon after this tragedy, Charles —— returned to Italy, as it was understood, in the first place having made arrangements that, for

my share in it, I should be paid an annuity of £1000 through his bankers. This I continued to receive for several years, but at last my craving for play did its office, and in the pressure for money to bring to the gaming-table, I disposed of the chance of my annuity to one of those transmuters of probabilities always to be found at such places, ready to give a thousand per cent. under its value for anything. With this money I visited Paris, where I met my old confederate desperately lavishing his thousands, where formerly he was compelled to limit his stake to a *louis*. He was losing ruinously, and, in the gall of rage, reproached me with doing that in which he himself was madly engaged. We parted foes, and, on arriving in England, it was intimated to me that in future my annuity would not be forthcoming.

“ It was at this crisis that a circumstance, learned by accident, caused me to visit Thames Ditton. I had no idea who the gentleman might be that occupied the cottage to which I desired access ; my business was with the

lady : how my errand sped need not be told. I need, moreover, scarce recal to your recollection that, subsequent to that interview at your suburban retreat, Caroline became the rallying point of the society under the name of the *Fraternité d'Argus*, which attracted so much curiosity and interest during your visit to Paris. I will not allude to your connexion with her—now : the day may come when my knowledge of that, and more, shall be revealed ; haply when the disclosure may be a secret of worth.

“ Here my story ends, for the present at least. I am grateful to you for aid, afforded at a time when instant succour was the measure by which the value could alone be rated. My need is still extreme, but I will not trespass further on the liberality of one who owes me so little. I shall make immediate application where I have the right to demand assistance ; should it be refused—should it, I say, be denied, then I will, as a last resource, go to you, with news proper to be bartered for money—first”—and the Jew hissed out the

words as if a serpent spake—" first having my revenge."

As I entered Long's, on my return from this singular interview, the hall-porter said there was a gentleman waiting for me in the coffee-room. At first I did not know my visitor, but his voice announced him. It was Panton Ridsdale, whom I had not seen since I left Oxford ; still the same tranquil-looking fellow, who, at the university, scorned to stretch out his arm for champagne, if there was ginger-beer at his elbow.

" Cousin Hyde," he began, after the true fashion of your epic, and with accents full of melody, " I've heard horrid things about my brother ; he's starving somewhere in the Isle of Wight, after trying to rob somebody's house. Your mother told me : I saw her at Brighton yesterday, complaining of being left alone by her brother, who set off abruptly for Cowes. It can't be that Launcelot has broken into your uncle's?—shocking, eh?"

Here was a pleasant passage in recitative. The first part of it, indeed, was indifferent to

me, for whether Mr. Launcelot Ridsdale had taken to burglary or the highway, was no affair of mine; but Mr. Thomas Longueville Lyster's insular excursion was by no means a matter to be trifled with. Because I had too much delicacy to tell an old gentleman that he was making a fool of himself, I was to be a consenting party to my own undoing: out of regard for Madame de Beauplan's fine feelings, rents and domains, to the tune of £6,000 of annual income (not to speak of stocks, consols, and divers and sundry other securities) were to be allowed quietly to slip through my fingers! Looking full into the benevolent face of my philosophic relative, I proceeded to make a demonstration in my own favour.

"Cousin Panton," I observed, "your intelligence is remarkably dreadful: what a frightful catastrophe it would be, if your brother should be hanged, and my uncle married! Surely we cannot contemplate any thing so awful, without an effort to avert it! Shall we not instantly set off——? No? not worth

travelling all night for? I read my answer in your shrug. Well, nine o'clock to-morrow morning then, breakfast with me; there is good coaching into Hants from the Cellar. Jack Peer and the Nimrod, won't that do? Remember, it's an errand of Christian charity."

Twenty years since, travelling on the Southampton road was supposed to be as near perfection as human locomotion might attain: they took you through, from office to office, in seven hours: now they carry you in three. When the atmospheric principle comes into work, they'll remove you from Falmouth to Berwick-upon-Tweed in forty minutes. But, vast as the obligations are which those who travel by land owe to steam, they are nothing in comparison to the debts of those who occupy their business in the great waters. If steam enable you to achieve ashore in an hour a distance that formerly required ten, afloat it permits you to reckon as certain upon a passage from port to port, which to our fathers was an affair of mere luck, or sheer chance medley.

Having reached Southampton, and duly refreshed and slept, next morning, as soon as the tide began to fall, we embarked in a clipping little cutter, which we had chartered for Cowes. With wind and water fair, the voyage down to Calshot Castle was done handsomely enough; but, once clear of the land, a brisk breeze from E.S.E. and the ebb tumbling over the Brambles, set us bodily to leeward — shaping our course, broadside on, for the Needles. There was about as much chance of our making Cowes as Constantinople; but, by dint of incredible care and luffing for the dear life, we managed at the end of six hours to bring up in the little harbour of Yarmouth, grateful that it was not abreast the Isle of Portland.

Within the haven rode as vicious-looking a fleet as ever floated on brine. It consisted of schooners, luggers, yawls, and every class of small craft suited to wicked purposes; for Yarmouth was, at this period, the head quarters of channel smuggling. Before the invention of the Preventive Service, its port was

the sure asylum of the free-trader, and its streets the recognised marts for his contraband combustibles. In those days, its quay was as rollicking, rakehelly a rendezvous as you should fall in with in a twelve months' cruise—where now the grim warder keeps watch—an antique bombadier, who relates to the listener (when haply he catches one) gaunt episodes from the war in Flanders, wherein the speaker deported himself (according to his own account) like another *Amadis de Gaul*.

This digression has afforded time for the buxom serving lass to put our dinner on table ; a single dish, but a cate for the gods where the materials may be had in perfection, as at the Wight. It was simply a boiled fowl stuffed with oysters—the fish inserted previous to the cooking—a condiment when rightly constructed to cheat death of its prey. The room in which we regaled was a spacious chamber, with a profusely ornamented roof, and walls of wainscoat, the hostel, formerly a monastery, having been the temporary pri-

son of Charles, previous to his confinement in Hurst Castle, after his liberation from Carisbrook. As soon as we had done justice to our meal, that is to say, as soon as we had swept off every vestige of it (a process common with justice), we became aware that another party was cultivating good cheer in an adjoining room; a thin partition alone divided us, and as from time to time snatches of their discourse reached our ears, it became evident that the wassailers belonged to the class of cavaliers who made the town their resort for business as well as pleasure. Store of mirth they had, beyond doubt, and, whatever the character of the wit, the laughter at all events was genuine. Presently there arose a demand for music, and without any of the indisposition to vocalize which, Horace tells us, was usual with singers in private companies in his day, (and which remains as Flaccus left it,) a clear hearty voice gave out a song to the following intent, amid the cheers and chorus of the society.

Hurrah ! for the sea, the wild, the free !
And the life a mariner leads ;
What joy of earth can match his mirth
That over the blue wave speeds !
Oh ! the bliss to feel the gallant keel
Through the white foam cleave its way,
As it bounds in pride on the water's wide,
And sweeps o'er the surges gay !

Morn comes o'er the waves, from the coral caves,
Her soft breath stirring the seas,
And glittering bright in her golden light
Are the ripples that dance to the breeze.
The waters glow, and the glad winds blow,
And the good boat gathers way.
Hurrah ! to ride on the sparkling tide,
And bound o'er the surges gay.

They may boast the strain of the woodland train,
The charm of the sylvan cheer,
They may tell of the race, the joys of the chase,
And the hunter's boon career :
But what is the sound of horn and hound
To the lay that the billows sing—
Or the bravest speed of the fleetest steed,
To a flight on the tempest's wing ?

Then hurrah! for the sea, the wild, the free,
And the merry mariner's life;
In storm or shine, there's bliss on the brine,
And the wave with joy is rife.
Let the hush'd wind sleep: on the startled deep
Let the storm and the lightning play;
Oh! still be our home on the ocean foam,
Our path o'er the waters gay!

After "glasses round," the custom among merry-makers of their class wherewith to fill up the intervals of their minstrelsy, another took up the chant, and sang the following characteristic carol, with which the new year is welcomed in by groups of the youths and maidens of Yarmouth—a practice, I believe, peculiar to that place.

"Wassail, wassail,¹ to our town!
The cup is white, and the ale is brown.
The cup is made of the ashen tree,
And so is the ale of the good barley.
Little maid, little maid, turn the pin,
Open the door, and let me come in:
God be here, and God be there—
I wish ye all a happy new year!"

¹ The Saxon term for "Health to you!"



CHAPTER XII.

“ LAST SCENE OF ALL.”

Sea solicitors—Scene continued—An old acquaintance *redivivus*—Night—Dark plotting—Dark doing—An abduction—A flight—A catastrophe—Adventure thickens—Sorrow's stern straight hand—Revenge, whose drink is blood—The fate of one who loved not wisely—Uncle Tom—Madame de Beauplan's.

“The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
For the weary winds are silent, and the moon is on the
deep;
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed
sleep.
Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet, till the phantoms flee,
Which that house, and hearth, and garden made dear to
thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings, are
not free
From the music of two voices, and the light of one sweet
smile!”

SHELLEY.

“Methought what pain it was to drown,
What dreadful noise of waters in my ears.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“Thou good old man!”

Ibid.

CHAPTER XII.

Between the claret, which the host furnished, neat as imported, without even the taint of an exciseman's eye having jeopardised its flavour, and the good fellowship of our neighbours, my companion looked like one the measure of whose content was full. He lounged in an ample oak chair, the very ideal of complacency, sipping, and sipping again, while, from time to time, he gave utterance to a running commentary on the symposium of the adjoining chamber.

“What a set of merry villains! — wish those French fellows didn't swear so awfully, though. That's right, sing more and *sacré* less;—well done, vinous Gall—

Ha! ha! ha! Chicot, vraiment,
Il bois toujours, ce bon enfant.

To be sure he does, whenever an opportunity offers. What's that jingling? Dice and a wine-glass for a box—eh?—ah? What do I hear—Launcelot's voice—my brother among the rogues !”

I had also caught the accents, and was not slow to recognize them; they were but too familiar. The music was presently at an end, and so indeed, apparently, was all the harmony. The party had now evidently engaged in play; for here the holder of bad cards smote the table with them in despair, and the dice were dashed down wildly amid shouts of triumph and execration.

“Seven's the main—nicked it,” roared Ridsdale, and we heard the spoil clutched in his grasp.

“He shall be cheat,” vociferated one.

“*Milles tonnerres de lambkin*,” screamed another; “*les dés sont chargés*.”

“The *capitaine* has got a pain in his temper,” remarked the winner.

“Let him grin and bear it,” said a looker-on.

“*Sacré cochon*”—“*voleur*”—“more grief, to the crapauds”—“pockets to let;” and thus, with a horrible din of laughter and lamentation, mirth and malediction, the gamblers urged their occupation fast and furious.

It was an easy thing to interpret the looks with which Panton Ridsdale listened to this knave’s conclave.

“Not now,” I said, in reply to that which was passing in his thoughts, “not to-night; it would be worse than folly now to attempt to reason with him. Come from this place, however; the night is mild, and the moon at full.”

I took his arm, and so passed out to a sort of esplanade lying between our inn and the sea, which, in time of war, did duty for a battery. The round moon made bright the still waters of the Solent, beyond which spread far and wide the dark outline of the New Forest. The young man walked silently for a space, and then, pausing and liberating his arm, said—

“My cousin, I am not liberal of speech, nor of effort ; but do not for that reason believe me one who may not be moved. Let me leave you now ; I am not master of my emotion, but rely on my prudence. I will take no step in this affair without your advice and sanction ; but my heart bleeds, and I would be alone.”

The scene and season harmonized well with the tone of my feelings. Silence and solitude are ever welcome to a mind diseased ; and mine was sick and sorry enough. I had loitered there some two or three hours, when a man, in a seaman’s rough jacket, accosted me, and asked “whether Master Ridsdale would come out again?”

“How do you know that he has been here at all?” I inquired, startled by a question that assured me we had been subjected to a long *surveillance* ; “and what do you want him for?”

“He is your friend !”

“He is : and what of that?”

“You will give him this letter at once.

My errand was to deliver it before midnight, and it wants but few minutes of it now : I have reasons for not shewing myself at that house ; therefore I waited till the last minute for the chance of his rejoining you. Do not delay ; it concerns him much."

The man disappeared, as he put the letter into my hands. I was standing, at the moment, under a sort of beacon, which marked the entrance to the harbour. The light fell upon the superscription, and I read the words "Launcelot Ridsdale," in the handwriting of Madame de Beauplans. While pondering on the course I should pursue, two persons approached, crossing a small grass-plot, which led to the esplanade. With the view to avoid an encounter, I stood behind one of the bastions while they passed ; and then, opening a door, took a passage, which appeared to lead to the inn.

It was quite dark, and much longer than seemed necessary for the space that separated the battery from the rear of the house. Having reached the end, to my surprise I found an

old iron wicket, and beyond it some dilapidated steps descending to a rude pier, on which the sea was breaking; for the wind had freshened as the night waned. Either this gate was not designed to open, or I could not discover how it was to be effected; for, after some minutes lost in the effort, I gave it up, and was about to retrace my way, when the sound of footsteps on the shingle caused me to pause. At that instant the two figures I had seen in the little lawn of the hotel reached the flight of steps, which, as I have said, led to the causeway communicating with the sea.

“Here’s shelter under the lee of this old wall,” said the foremost of the pair, throwing himself against it, and pulling a meerschaum from beneath his boat-cloak, “and a whiff of sound tobacco is a good friend in a lonely hour—but we shall not have long to wait: it ought to be the time now—hark! there goes eight bells;” and as he spoke the clear strokes that announced midnight rang from the deck of a cutter, anchored in the tide-

way about two cables length from the shore.

"They'll be here presently now."

"I don't know how that may be," replied the other, whom I at once knew to be Launcelot Ridsdale; "I don't know how that may be. I have had no answer to my letter, and they may not come at all."

"But the money will," observed the smoker, "and that is all we want; the broad pieces are certain, for I've Jacob Lyell's word for it, and he's upon honour always—with his friends; what his foes may say is nothing to us. Ho! ho! the pieces are sure."

"Curses on the dross," cried Ridsdale, "my curses on it! May it reap as it sows; and what but a curse has it ever brought to me! It was the golden image of my idolatry, for which I stained hand and heart, body and spirit; and behold its disciple, look on its worshipper—a broken man, without hearth or heritage, kindred or country, stealing forth to exile, with the worm that never dies in his soul."

"Never spin that yarn," cried the sailor,

impatiently, “ but look at the barky—ain’t she a beauty? Stand by your main halyards, my sons; hurrah with it, throat and pique. There’s canvass to sit! trim as a lady’s tucker. Now up with the tack: so—belay *that*: and she rides like a duck. Pipe gig away: softly men, softly: easy with your stroke, long, strong, and together; lift her through it; out of the wash of the tide—there she is, snug. I say, messmate, what’s that looming to win’ard?”

The night was no longer clear or calm, for with the gale, already blowing stiffly from the south-east, drifted heavy clouds, which from time to time wholly obscured the moonlight. One of the gleams that at intervals broke through the fast gathering rack, fell upon a figure gliding by the margin of the waters, where they broke angrily on the beach. As it drew nearer, it seemed to approach more irresolutely, but at length it stood close to the spot occupied by the speakers; the foot of the steps leading from the wicket.

“ She has joined them,” whispered one at

my elbow to some other, both hidden in the stark darkness; "she is here, almost within reach of our hands. I reckoned truly this passage would bring us to the place to serve our purpose. Whether she did well or ill in trusting those she meets so unseasonably, no mischief can come of the means we have adopted to make her safety sure."

"You are welcome," said Ridsdale, addressing the figure now standing before him; "you are welcome, though I am not your debtor for a similar courtesy. Your circle has grown too dainty for me, eh? Your society has become too refined to admit old friends—but not lovers in such a category—not lovers that might be grandsires. What says madame?—quite silent? Has the bride elect no speech but for the gallant groom?" and he motioned to lay hands on her with whom he spoke—for the figure was a woman.

"Put no touch on me," exclaimed the full deep voice of Madame de Beauplans; "I am here to receive and pay for intelligence: are you prepared to communicate it?"

"I am, and a good pennyworth you shall

have ; but first some earnest of the bargain. My friend, the captain here, is somewhat greedy of gold."

" I'll take her word for more than she can carry of it," cried the person to whom this observation applied, dashing the meerschaum from his mouth ; " I've done it before, and I will again. The brother of the *fraternité* will ride for her errand on the green sea as he did on the green sod of the Bois de Boulogne—on honour : so now despatch, and let's aboard, for the tide of ebb has been running down for the last hour."

" Take the money," said Caroline. " I give it in advance as the best means to secure your being brief. Be to the purpose if ye can, and will."

" Both, Lady Bountiful," responded Ridsdale, taking the heavy purse offered him, and speaking in hollow, harsh tones : " you shall have no fault to find with me on either score. You would have tidings of the Baron Von Hoffman, who, as you imagine, wounded all but to the death the benefactor of your youth, now the present patron of your fortunes in their

worst need. Know that the Jew was denied the retribution he coveted : mine was the hand that struck him down. Hoffman was but permitted to be the paramour of his master's daughter. You start; the marquis has not made you acquainted with these facts. I had forgotten—he learnt them but yesterday.”

“ Villain, monstrous, murderous villain !” shrieked the unhappy woman ; “ it’s a lie !—a damned lie, coined in hell, and uttered by the most accurst of its fiends !”

“ He was prevented,” continued Ridsdale, without noticing the interruption, “ sending you the news, no doubt, in consequence of his attendance at the death-bed of a foreign gentleman, who died from wounds he inflicted on himself at an hotel, a few days after his arrival in London, the effect, it is rumoured, of some communication made to him by a mendicant. I must not forget to tell you that the stranger was the son of your friend the Marquis de L——, and the youth in whom you took such an interest when he was the inmate of your chateau

at Versailles, the young Italian—*was your brother.*”

Again at my elbow there was a sound, but now only a convulsive effort at articulation. To these ominous words Caroline made no reply, neither did she move, but her arms fell to her side, and she stood erect, as a corse might stand. For some minutes all was still and silent, and then the figure of the woman fell to the earth, as a statue drops from its pedestal.

As it fell, Ridsdale caught the inanimate form in his arms, at the same time exchanging a signal with the smuggler ; and instantly the boat, which had been lying in the offing, was alongside the pier. Towards this he bore his burden with desperate energy, while, close at my side, a rough, firm voice sung out :

“ Avast, avast there : off grapplings : Jacob Lyell ain’t the man to stand by quietly, and see a woman keel-hawled. Curse the door ! burst it, if ye can’t find the handle.”

This was addressed to a companion, who was already endeavouring to force the wicket,

and whom I at once recognised to be the Jew, Von Hoffman.

“ It’s made fast in some way,” I said ; “ the only hope is to break it open—one effort—and together.”

We threw ourselves against it several times before it gave way, and the opportunity this afforded them was not neglected by Ridsdale and his party. They were of course aware that an instant alarm would be raised, even if those about to come to the rescue should, of themselves, be unequal to defeat their design, and they strained every nerve to carry out the attempt in which they had engaged.

Caroline had been placed in the boat, and it was already several fathoms clear of the land, as we rushed down the causeway. I had flung myself from the steps, and was the first at the waters’ edge, but the light vessel was already flying fast from the shore, under the strong strokes of the rowers. All hope was at an end; and in the passion of my rage I cried aloud, and the name of her on

whom I called was borne after them on the wild night wind.

It is possible that she heard it—that the sound of well-remembered accents aroused her—for, as a stream of bright moonlight fell on the waves through which they were bounding, I saw her struggling fiercely with Ridsdale. As I gazed on them, torn by anxiety and fury, there was a yell, and then followed a heavy plash, and the waters foamed, and the struggling figures were seen no more ! . . .

I watched the boat till it ran under the cutter's quarter : marked some men leap from it to the deck, then all the canvass that could stand was crowded on her, and she darted with the speed of a bird to seaward.

Although this outrage had been perpetrated within fifty yards of an inn still filled with waking guests, nothing was known of it till the alarm was given by Jacob Lyell, who summoned them to give such assistance as they might, while I continued to strain my eyes after the fast-disappearing vessel.

Presently all the small craft in the har-

bour was under weigh, but neither on the surface nor beneath it could proof be found of the character or extent of the catastrophe we had witnessed. Fatal casualties were things by no means rare among the visiters to this rendezvous of free trade, but such an event as this was without a parallel, and struck both natives and foreigners with consternation.

Its effect on Panton Ridsdale was terrible. He made no observation, indeed, but his efforts to keep down his feelings were like death-throes, each leaving the sufferer more and more prostrated. I did not part from him during the remainder of the night, and with the first light we were on the scene of the fatality. It was dead low water, and a wide extent of dry beach spread before us. Thither we bent our steps mournfully, and a few paces from the spot where but a few hours before she had stood full of life and beauty, lay a cold dank form, that once was Caroline de Beauplans!

* * * *

Rumour was not slow in bearing the sad

event to the retreat at Alum Bay, but it was evening ere I could put on resolution to visit it. The simple yet stern grief of the domestics was the best test of the power which that extraordinary woman had gained over their affections. But there were others by whom her loss was mourned with a passionate sorrow, which neither gratitude, nor esteem, nor reverence can beget. It is true that they whom she had bound to her by such ties knew not her folly or her guilt; but one there was whose love would have felt no change, had they been fifty-fold as dark as they were. When the rosebud fades and withers, her fragrant sisters droop alike, whether blight or canker have spoiled her bloom and sweetness.

It was dusk when I entered the library, and, but for a sound as of some one breathing hard, I should not have known that it was already occupied. The servant who attended me proceeded to light a lamp, and by its first faint ray I discovered my uncle buried in an arm-chair. He neither by word nor sign ap-

peared sensible of my presence till we were alone, and then, as it were instinctively, he spoke :—

“Hyde, you are, of course, not ignorant of the purpose which brought me here : I know your errand ; let this serve as much as may be to spare details. As *she* would have had a right if left but a little longer to such office at my hands, it shall not be foregone because of a too premature bereavement. I came to lead her to the altar : I will remain and follow her to the tomb !” Here he gasped convulsively, his breath choked him, his brow grew black, his lips ashy white. I thought his last agony was come :—“I will see her laid in her grave,” he resumed, recovering himself by a mortal struggle, “the better to fit me for other obsequies, which I shall soon be required to attend : to you I entrust the conduct of the solemnity on an occasion” — and his speech was the accent of a broken heart — “an occasion I might have averted, for I felt the hand of Fate was on her when she went hence last night. I besought her not to go :

oh ! why did I listen to her persuasion, or, at least, why went I not also, to die with her, as I shall for her !”

The old man’s passion of despair was strangling him ; his clenched fingers strove to grasp the air, his eyes glared and grew dim, and with a shout of ghastly laughter he fell to the floor, cold and rigid as ice.

As the night advanced, my uncle grew more calm, and he conversed with me freely about the future, recurring occasionally to the past, but reluctantly : — “ It was ever my presentiment,” he said, in the course of his observations, “ a feeling I could not shake off, that the prediction of the French woman, Le Normand, would be fulfilled : — ‘ the boy’s folly shall be the old man’s fate.’ It will be accomplished to the letter. This may have come of chance, or my belief in it of moral weakness : but might she not have foretold the end from divining the property of my character ? These are mysteries which only affect us little, because they exist in all the issues of life and nature. Let us, however, speak of facts. I shall

not long survive this blow : neither the hard realities of experience, nor the idealities of philosophy, have fitted me to outlive hope. I thank God for it. Your career is before you ; such provision as I considered necessary to enable you to support the position to which you were born I secured to you by deeds in the hands of my agents, executed at the same time with the conveyance of my Staffordshire estates to her whom we have lost.

“ These, and all else she possessed, are bequeathed to her sister. The attachment between you and that admirable girl is known to me, and I cordially approve it. By your union with her, my fortune will return to the channel from which I did not once imagine it would have been diverted. Let the vision be confined to the dreamer. You need rest, so we will bring this discourse to an end. Tomorrow early let me see you again. I shall have matter of concern to dispose of.”

It was past midnight before I reached Yarmouth ; and, on inquiring for Panton Ridsdale, I learned that he had left soon after my

departure for Alum Bay. I found a note from him, however, in which, after some expressions of deep regret for his brother's presumed fate, he informed me it was his intention to hasten into Yorkshire, to break the intelligence to his family.

As I read, some one knocked at the door of the chamber; the visiter of so unseasonable an hour was Von Hoffman : his manner was as abrupt as his mission.

"I told you," he began, "it was probable we should meet again, and that I should be the bearer of news you would fain know. I was here last night to fulfill that intimation; why it was delayed need not be explained. You heard the disclosures of Launcelot Ridsdale : that terrible revelation, befitting the infernal spirit that made it.

"Whence he had his materials matters not: enough that they were true. *I* told the boy *who* had been his lady-love; *I* told the father the story of his children. I come now to tell you who that same Marquis de L—— may be. He is the Charles ——, who lured and

led me to perdition, the other fruit of his Italian connexion being Madame de Beauplans and her sister. These he consigned in infancy to the care of Major G——, one of his early associates, while he pursued his career of reckless villany and desperate vice. Madame de Beauplans became acquainted with the fact during the early portion of her residence in France, and previous to the rencontre in the Palais Royal, of which you were witness; indeed, at the time, she was an agent of the society, of which she subsequently was the leader, while Ridsdale ostensibly stood at its head. Her sister, I believe, was never made acquainted with the history of her birth: the secret of his son's existence was unknown to 'the marquis' till he owed the intelligence to me; how I learnt it, and more, I may yet reveal to you. For the present, we part: I came not to ask you for money," he observed, as I drew my note-case from my pocket; "my funds have been recruited from a source I have less reluctance to take advantage of,

than the generosity of impulse." And thus ended my knowledge of this extraordinary man, whose days had yet to number some years of a modern swindler's life, without a parallel in fiction.

The first dawn of a fresh spring morning was marked by the faint streak of lilac tinging the line of horizon between Southampton Water and Spithead, as I crossed the table-land, beneath which spreads the valley that forms the head of Alum Bay. I reached the house of mourning — the door stood open — I entered — all was silent and solitary. It has been told as a comment on the hollowness of mortal honour and estate, that when William Pitt had breathed his last, one whom chance led to inquire after him made his way through vacant halls and deserted chambers to the couch on which rested, "unhonoured and alone," all that was mortal of the man, who, but a few moments before, ruled the destinies of half the world. There is reason to doubt the philosophy of the deduction. May it not be that solemn proof of the emptiness of

life's accessories, and the transitory heritage of human station, lead men to feel the worthlessness of any homage or reverence they can offer them?

All was solitary and silent, and I passed into the library without meeting a member of the establishment. The windows were open, and the young sunlight and free mountain air played pleasantly through it. There was a bright wood fire on the hearth, and beside it, the back towards me, in an easy chair, reclined the figure of my uncle; his look apparently bent upon the east, now gorgeous with gold, and emeralds, and sapphires. I paused for some minutes, unwilling to break his reverie, and then approached. His arms hung at his sides—his eyes were closed; he seemed to sleep. I took his hand—he slept—to wake no more!

* * * * *

In the secluded village of Calbourne there stands a small, antique church, in a grave-garden of funereal flowers, and waving with yew and holly, willow and cypress. Those

who have loitered beneath their shades have haply observed, under its solitary cedar,—a dark and melancholy tree, whose branches wear the unchanging livery of the grave,—a slab of white marble, inscribed

C : + T : L : L.

Q'un Souvenir !

How few who look upon that lowly stone dream of the wild and wayward fortunes it covers ! How few live as if life were the sepulchre of hope : and, of all who have made half their appointed pilgrimage, is there one who knows it not to be such ?

CHAPTER XIII.

L'ENVOY.

Are the ways of Providence inscrutable? Are they not Nature's paths?—The fortunes of genius — Alum Bay once more—A gentle spirit in a gentle spot—First feelings; their course and consequence—Love is its own avenger.

“ The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.”

Lear.

“ Alas! not there: I cannot bear—
A sound from thee, Rosalind, dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our pleasant home, recurs
Even here, where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!—

.

For many months the maid had known
This scene, and now she thither turned
Her footsteps—not alone.

The friend, whose falsehood she had mourned,
Sate with her.”

SHELLEY'S *Rosalind and Helen.*

CHAPTER XIII.

The ways of Providence are inscrutable : such is a position of philosophy to which experience renders ready assent — but only as the exception to a rule. It is to be lamented that so much has been written in illustration of this proposition, in which it is dealt with as the governing principle of divine prudence. As an abstract theory it is true — though necessarily ungrateful, however useful as a doctrine to inculcate hope and trust — the good angels of life. What ghastly histories, what truculent tomes our literature owes to the treatment, as a system of metaphysics, of a small portion of the social scheme !

It is as unseasonable as unpleasant that

this section of the moral disposition should be constantly adopted as the argument over the agent in works of imagination and instructive fiction. Is it the way “to make man happy, and to keep him so,” to force before him issues which exhibit his condition as governed by caprice? Can you foster a manly spirit, and nourish common sense, with *vol-au-vents* of sentimental conceits?

That there are mysteries in the eternal dispensation, does not admit of doubt—that it is *all* beyond the grasp of reason, or the guage of mortal understanding, is not true. One who mused on man and his destiny, in a vigorous vein and an honest spirit, says, “the race, if not always, is, ninety-nine times in a hundred, to the swift, and the battle to the strong.” We are not justified by reason or revelation in believing that the dew twice blessed descends alike on the just and the unjust, shedding on weed and flower an equal unction.

Let us ever take a cheerful and a hopeful review of the world, the scene whereon our part is to be played out. How common is it

to attribute to a career of letters, for instance, sorrow and suffering. We regard those whom the muse delights to honour, as well as the labourers on Parnassus for their daily bread, as men separated from their fellows, and sent forth on a forlorn hope. Even Wordsworth, the calm and philosophic hermit of stirring times, falls into this error. He tells us that, in his musings on the defeated hopes and fortunes of genius—

“ He thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride :
Of him, who walk'd in glory and in joy,
Following his plough upon the mountain side.”

Did genius work the desolation of these eager souls? No. They were unwise : each fell short of virtue — they sacrificed to passion in lieu of principle — and the boy accomplished in one wild draught that which the glorious ploughman achieved in a thousand.

Nature, both moral and physical, is governed by general rules, though each be subject to occasional directions. Put a man into an oven, and you bake him, notwithstanding a

fellow who used to exhibit himself was as little affected by fire as a salamander. The probability is these rules shall not be broken with impunity. Curtius took one terrible leap and perished—he who made Niagara his shower-bath performed a score before he was disposed of. So surely as we do not gather figs from thistles, we cannot sow vice and look for a crop of content.

* * * * *

Autumn succeeding the ill-omened spring, whose issues, as they regarded my fortunes, have been told in the preceding chapters, had arrived, when I reached the little village of —, on my return from a long and solitary ramble among the mountains and lakes of the north. The hamlet was within a few miles of B—, to which I purposed paying a visit of condolence passive; and, having refreshed, I set forward, towards the close of a rich, ripe day, for the home of my many affections. I passed into the grounds and gained the conservatory, which communicated with the ground-floor.

I gathered some flowers—there were neither

pansies nor rue among them—I wanted no memorials of thought or regret—and entered the house. From chamber to chamber I went, loitering in each, to renew acquaintance with some familiar nook and friendly corner. Having thus consumed the evening, I left again, and took up my quarters for the night at a village alehouse in the neighbourhood, and thence departed, early on the following morning, without having encountered, under my own roof, or within its precincts, one to bid God speed me! These are the passages of life from which we glean more practical philosophy than precept could teach, were the round world a school of Platos.

The *res angusta* was upon me, as I pushed onward for the metropolis, with the double purpose of recruiting and bidding farewell to my mother, who was there for a short stay, previous to a lengthened self-banishment, which was my only remaining course. I pass our interview without allusion to its details, save inasmuch as it put me in possession of intelligence that my agent had made many

anxious inquiries about me, and expressed his desire for an immediate communication of my address. So soon as I left her, therefore, I hastened to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and found him full of news and congratulation.

"I have received for you, Mr. Marston," he began, without waiting for any of the ordinary professional circumlocution, "at the hands of Messrs. —— and ——, an assignment of all the real and personal property of your late uncle, Mr. Longueville Lyster, made over by him during his lifetime to Madame de Beauplans, and devised by that lady, in her will, to her sister, Miss Charlotte G——, the client of those gentlemen. It is in my possession a considerable period, and I have been most desirous for your instructions on the matter."

"Was there no personal intimation of such a proceeding from the lady herself?" I inquired.

"None whatever—except that she had expressed her design of remaining in the Isle of Wight for some months, and her solicitors—"

“ Give me the paper,” I said, “ and I’ll let you hear from me further about it.”

A wiser, if not a better man, I stood once more on the threshold of a spot that had been the theatre of so many of the consequences of my life; and on which yet another was to point its moral. A wiser and a sadder man, I leaned upon the simple wicket through which, in such brief space of time, had passed so many fierce passions—so much of sin and sorrow. It was early morning, and the air was still and fragrant, inviting to meditation, like some solemn mass, with its incense breathing silence. A natural cleft in the down, which, rising like a wall, served as one of the boundaries of the rural garden, had been converted into a sort of arbour, and I seated myself within it.

Fit associates of the scene, there were with me the shades of those who filled my thoughts. She whose taste had created it—who had fled to it as the stricken deer to the thicket—what had been her fortune?—one inscrutable to man’s reason. He, who had come to it full

of dark designs and fearful purposes, where was *he*, and what his fate?—ought for which his career was unmeet prelude? And that kind old man, whose heart had burst in a struggle for which length of days forbade him strength—was *his* a destiny beyond the reach of our faculties?

All—all, the companions of my youth, and premature heralds of that eternity whose summons I awaited with hope and without terror—had not each been, by his early fate, a vindicator of the laws of nature?

The sun was high when I approached the house. The window from which Ridsdale had beheld the conscience-invoked spirit of his imagined victim was open, and I entered through it into the library.

The breakfast equipage was on a table, by which Charlotte sat in the act of breaking the seal of a letter. She did not perceive me, so fixed was her attention by its contents.

“Will he come?” she said—and while she spoke I was by her side.

“He is here,” I answered, interpreting the

question with a precipitancy that was both the cause and consequence of surprise ; “ he is here, to express his gratitude for a munificence he has but now learnt, and to return the instrument of a bounty he feels not the less because he cannot profit by it.”

“ You are fatigued,” she said hurriedly, “ and need food and rest : we will speak of this business presently ; sit down—here, near to me.”

And thus at last we had come together ! Thus it was appointed for me to meet the idol of my soul's young adoration—thus to win the shrine, where my vows would have been profanation, my worship sacrilege ! Time, whose progress is rarely made without rude token of the passage, had visited her with a charmed wing. The radiance of loveliness encompassed her like a glory. Oh ! the blush and bloom of that young beauty ! the form and fashion that were scarce of earth ! the look that was all of heaven !

“ You have had a long solitary sojourn here,”

I observed, anxious to break a silence that grew too embarrassing.

“ A sad one,” she answered, “ but not solitary ; my father has been with me. You are aware of that family history which I never fully understood till he joined me here, to baptize with tears the tomb of her whose cradle never knew the sunshine of a father’s smile. My sister,” she gasped, “ my wayward, worshipped sister—I have lost you—I am alone—the world is a wilderness to me ; affection’s desert, whose people have hearts of ice.”

“ Speak not so,” I said, “ Charlotte, to me.” She looked up—our eyes and souls met. “ Talk not of cold hearts—it is a mockery ; let us go abroad : I am faint—we will not talk here.”

She threw a shawl around her, and we walked in silence down the green valley that led to the sea ; there was a purpose in her manner.

It has been said that here, at high water, the wave washed the turf. It was full flood ;

and taking a wooded path that branched to the left from the open lawn, we came to a natural cave, whose floor the tide laved as gently as the dew falls. A slight seat had been constructed within it, over which was traced—

Here rest, and muse upon the sea,
And hope. Are not her dreams as fleet
And restless as the waves that flee
Before the storm with silver feet?

We entered and sat together. I can recall every word, look, thought, of that dreadful interview, as though it had passed yesterday—they are all written on my brain: the hour of account was come.

Charlotte was the first to speak—

“My friend,” she said, “I have brought you to this spot, because it is one in which, for months past, I have communed with my spirit, and I have that to say which needs every aid of circumstance to nerve me for it. The dream of my life is to be told and interpreted; forgive me if I overstep a maiden’s

license. You have precipitated my course by the refusal which brought you here—will you tell me whether aught else moved you to this visit? for years I have wasted my soul in the belief that I shared no portion of your thought, your regard—shall I speak it—of your love: is this so?”

“With the first fond yearning of life I clave to your image, Charlotte,” I cried, while a cold mist bathed my forehead, and my words were as fire in my throat: “my passion for you grew with my life; it has become too strong for it. Spare me, oh! spare me more than this avowal. I must leave you, broken as I am in fortune and in heart: add not despair to my burden, for the sake of sweet pity: if I survive this trial, let it be with my reason.”

She turned her deep blue eyes on me; big bright tears fell softly on my brow and cheek, for she had fallen on my bosom; a stream of molten lead had been as dewdrops to them!

“If you will not take the dross,” she whis-

pered—and she grew to my heart as she said it—“will you refuse the hand that offers it?”

* * * * *

It was accomplished ! The desecrated altar of virtue claimed, as its oblation, hope, love, the life of life. Such sacrifice I offered : who shall say the ways of Providence are inscrutable ?

THE END.

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